Booklist

Leading book discovery

Vol. 121 No. 19/20
6/1/25 & 6/15/25

Spotlights on

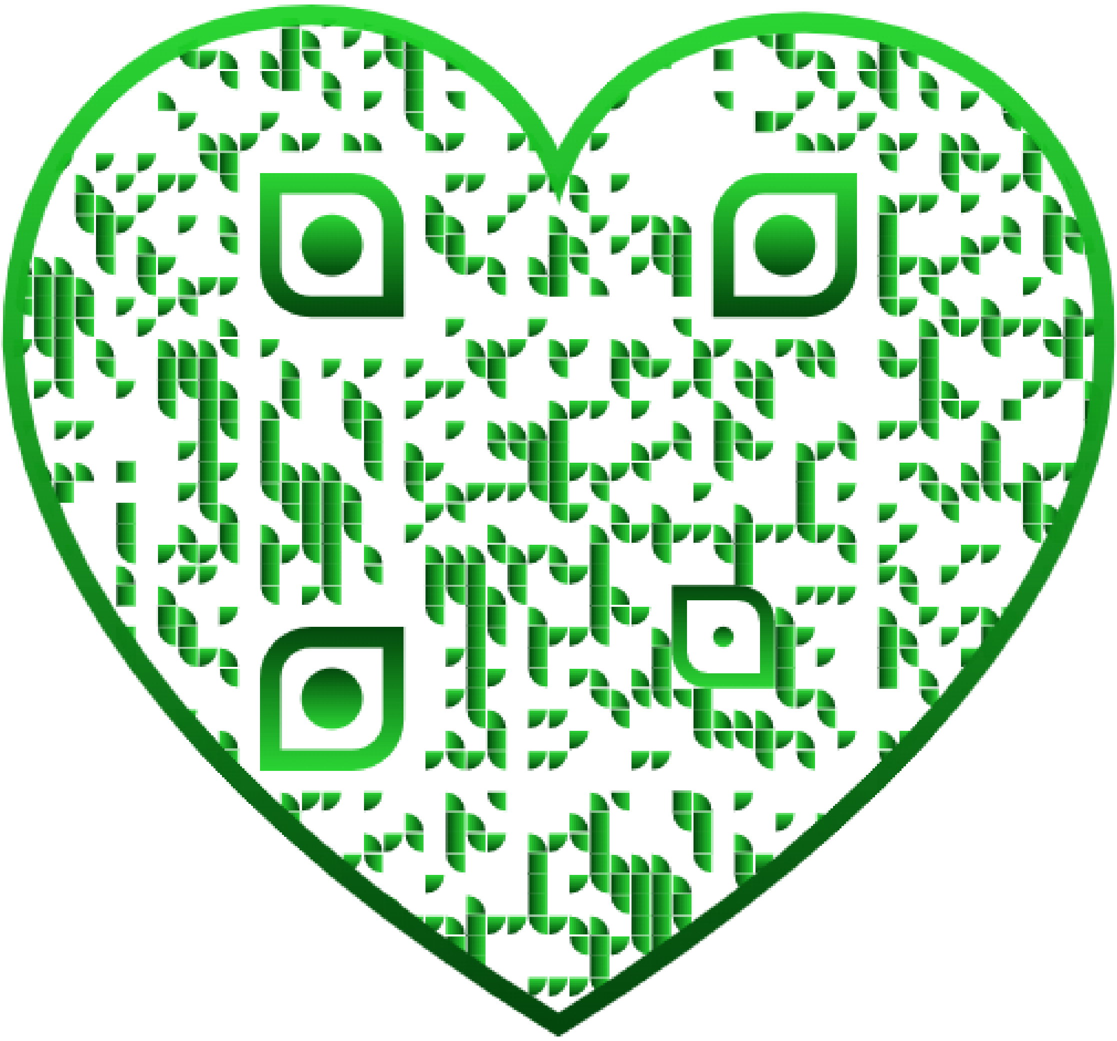
SF/Fantasy & Horror

and

Audio

Art designed by Tyler Comrie, from *Two Truths and a Lie*, by Cory O'Brien

ALA American Library Association



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Booklist

June 1 & 15, 2025
Volume 121, Issue 19/20

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Letter from the Publisher / George Kendall

If you are attending the ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition in Philadelphia, please be sure to stop by and visit the *Booklist* team at booth 1720. When you register, you'll notice a copy of *Booklist Reader* in your registration bag. I hope you'll have a chance to peruse it and consider subscribing to *Booklist Reader* in print. It's an incredibly rich and informative monthly magazine for library workers and library patrons. In each issue, readers are sure to find books that will inspire, educate, and provide an escape.

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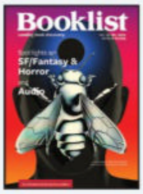
At the conference, I hope you'll be able to attend the award ceremonies sponsored by *Booklist*. The Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction (adult book awards) celebration takes place June 28; the Odyssey Awards (audio) are on June 28, and the Printz Awards (youth) will be presented on June 27.

Regarding the Printz Awards, I refer readers to Sarah Hunter's Carte Blanche: A Tribute to a True Original (p.68). As many of you know, the beloved writer, book enthusiast, and longtime *Booklist* contributor, Michael Cart, passed away earlier this year. As Sarah notes, "Michael believed staunchly in the capacity of teens to appreciate great literature, which was a driving force behind his efforts to establish the Michael L. Printz award."

As we attend the conference, the *Booklist* team, along with many of you, will be remembering Michael Cart's voice, craft, and three decades of enlightening *Booklist* reviews and columns. Sarah continues, "Michael recognized how important it was for young readers especially to see themselves and their concerns reflected in their literature, and this core principle drove his important, vocal, and career-spanning advocacy for LGBTQIA+ teens and the books they saw themselves in."

We must continue to emphasize the importance of seeing ourselves in art and literature, the affirmation of our humanity and our belonging, but also our uniqueness. Thank you, Michael. We will miss you greatly.



On the Cover

From *Two Truths and a Lie*, by Cory O'Brien, which appears on the Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts, p.15. Cover art designed by Tyler Comrie. Used with permission by Pantheon Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

Booklist (ISSN 0006-7385) is published twice monthly, except in July and August, by the American Library Association (ALA, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601). Address editorial correspondence to Booklist, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601. Subscriptions: USA and Canada: $184.95 per year; all other countries, $224.95. Single copy $15. Address changes, new subscriptions, and renewals correspondence to: Booklist, P.O. Box 977, Lincolnshire, IL 60069; 1-888-350-0949; or booklistsubs@omeda.com. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Booklist, P.O. Box 977, Lincolnshire, IL 60069. Copyright © 2025 by American Library Association. All materials may be photocopied for the noncommercial purpose of scientific or educational advancement granted by Sections 107 and 108 of the Copyright Revision Act of 1976. For other reprinting, photocopying, or translating, address requests to George Kendall (gkendall@ala.org). Opinions expressed in *Booklist* and *Booklist Reader* columns are those of the author and do not reflect ALA views unless so stated.

Booklist
June 1 & 15, 2025
Volume 121, Issue 19/20

In This Issue

Sections

3 Adult Nonfiction
21 Adult Fiction
55 Graphic Novels
66 Youth Nonfiction
74 Series Nonfiction Showcase
77 Youth Fiction
111 Audio

Spotlight on SF/Fantasy & Horror

44 New SF/Fantasy & Horror
46 Essentials
Fantasy Anti-Heroes
by Susan Maguire
49 Talking With
Becky Siegel Spratford
by Susan Maguire
50 Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror
51 Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts
61 New SF/Fantasy & Horror Graphic Novels
62 Essentials
Middle-Grade Space Adventures
by Sarah Hunter
64 Manga Essentials
Frequently Requested Horror
by Sara Smith
95 New SF/Fantasy & Horror for Youth
96 Top 10 SF/Fantasy Books for Youth
98 Book Map
Enchanted Forests
by Allie Stevens
102 Essentials
Magic in Nature
by Julia Smith
106 Essentials
Epic Fantasy Picture Books
by Ronny Khuri
118 Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror Novels on Audio

Spotlight on Audio

113 *Booklist* Odyssey Interview, Young Adults
Abigail Marks for HarperAudio
by Heather Booth
114 *Booklist* Odyssey Interview, Youth
Andy Jones for Dreamscape
by Heather Booth

Features

7 *Booklist* Carnegie Medal Interview
Kevin Fedarko
by Allison Escoto
10 Focus on Science & Technology
25 *Booklist* Carnegie Medal Interview
Percival Everett
by Allison Escoto
26 Self-Published Books Showcase
by BlueInk Review
68 Carte Blanche
A Tribute to a True Original
by Sarah Hunter
116 Classics Corner
120 *Booklist* Backlist
Indigenous Horror
by Leah von Essen

Index to Advertisers

Anne Pierce	22
Annick	88
Astra	67
Beacon	5
Bound To Stay Bound	70
Candlewick	97
Charlesbridge	89
DC Comics	56
Disney	23
DreamScape	112
Fabled Films	79
Flowerpot	73
HarperCollins	cover 2, 59, 82, cover 4
Holiday House	XX
Macmillan	104
Oni	60
Orca	84
Sequoia	115
Shadow Mountain Publishing	87
Simon & Schuster	47
Starscape/Tor Teen	45
VIZ	cover 3
Wonderscape	111

Adult Nonfiction

Philosophy & Psychology

Deep Listening: Transform Your Relationships with Family, Friends, and Foes.

By Emily Kasriel.

June 2025. 352p. illus. Morrow, $30 (9780063352988); e-book (9780063353008). 158.2.

For a world torn apart by wars, politics, and misunderstanding, longtime BBC media executive Kasriel has a plan: deep listening. Deep listening is “transformational” rather than “transactional,” she writes. With standard listening, one aims for facts and information; deep listening is intended to be an interaction that will leave both sides feeling respected and understood. Deep listening is especially needed when speaker and listener disagree. Kasriel offers eight steps to perfecting this technique, including creating a safe space, tuning into your own thoughts, being present, and being curious. Listeners are also instructed to hold eye contact, keep silent, reflect back the speaker’s thoughts, and dig more deeply into the issues. Most chapters conclude with a recap and a challenge to the reader. Kasriel shares her own successful and not-so-successful experiences in interviews with world figures as well as examples from her coaching sessions. She concludes with warnings about setting boundaries and not being drawn into others’ stories. Kasriel’s practical steps and insights are sure to prompt deeper and more thoughtful interactions. *—Candace Smith*

Do More Good: Inspiring Lessons from Extraordinary People.

By Neil Ghosh.

June 2025. 368p. Post Hill, paper, $18.99 (9798888459249); e-book (9798888459256). 158.2.

Ghosh taps into a wide range of high achievers in this inspiring book. Some are known worldwide for their messages, including the Dalai Lama (practice compassion), Joe Biden (respect opponents), Mother Teresa (find your calling), Angelina Jolie (use your privilege), Malala Yousafzai (speak out), and Rosa Parks (step up). Others are less widely known but still have made an impact, from the author’s own parents, who taught him empathy, to industrialist Asok Motayed (mentoring), Sal Khan of Khan Academy, (rethink what you know), and former Ghanaian president John Kufuor (protect democracy). Ghosh begins with a brief look at each person’s life and then moves to the lesson that each person has taught the world. The author recalls his connection with each subject and what he has learned from their association. What makes this book especially valuable are the lists of organizations (with websites) and the suggested personal activities that follow each profile, helping readers put these principles into action. Anyone looking for practical ways to make a difference in the world can turn here. *—Candace Smith*

The Upper Hand: Mastering Persuasion and Getting What You Want with the Science of Social Engineering.

By Abbie Maroño.

June 2025. 240p. BenBella/Matt Holt, $28 (9781637746844); e-book (9781637746851). 158.2.

Behavioral scientist Maroño distills her expertise in psychology, influence, and decision-making into this accessible guide for everyday interactions. Drawing from her experience training the U.S. Secret Service and other high-level agencies, Maroño offers readers a practical framework for ethically guiding conversations and collaborations: investigate, validate, and relate. Through real-world examples and approachable language, she illustrates how influence can be used without coercion, emphasizing respect, vulnerability, and self-awareness. Techniques such as “shelving” strong opinions, adjusting metaphorical “handshake pressure,” and avoiding manipulative tactics are broken down in relatable ways. The book advocates for authenticity and thoughtful engagement, reminding readers that influence stems from understanding, not overpowering. Useful for professionals, collaborators, and anyone navigating complex social dynamics, *Upper Hand* offers insight into building trust and connection while remaining ethically grounded. *—Roxanne Pico-Lenz*

You Are More Than Your Body: 30+ Evidence-Based Strategies for Living Well with Chronic Illness.

By Jennifer Caspari.

June 2025. 192p. North Atlantic, paper, $19.95 (9798889842378); e-book (9798889842385). 158.1.

Born with cerebral palsy, clinical psychologist Caspari knows firsthand what it’s like to live with a lifelong health challenge. This makes her an ideal guide, as she tracks how life improvement often follows distress or a personal challenge. She asks how people can improve their quality of life. Among her wise tips: line up one’s daily behavior with personal values, and schedule 30 minutes of “worry time.” Using minitests (for example, picking emotions from a list of feelings that include “frazzled” and “shaken”), she makes it easy for people to figure out what they’re feeling and what gives meaning to their lives. She advocates for learning coping skills and practicing unconditional self-compassion and acceptance. Appreciate all that the human body can do (digest food, breathe) rather than obsessing about appearance and comparison. Readers will benefit from Caspari’s emphasis on gratitude, self-forgiveness, and goals that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound). Despite some overly obvious tips (drink water, eat regularly), this primer is a winner, written by someone who talks the talk and walks the walk. *—Karen Springen*

Religion

The Girl Who Baptized Herself: How a Lost Scripture about a Saint Named Thecla Reveals the Power of Knowing Our Worth.

By Meggan Watterson.

July 2025. Random, $31 (9780593595008); e-book (9780593595015). 270.1.

Theologian Watterson (*Mary Magdalene Revealed*, 2019) offers a bold, feminist exploration of spiritual awakening through the story of Thecla. Drawing from Gnostic texts, such as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* and *The Gospel of Mary*, Watterson blends ancient scripture with personal stories to show how awakening can, and often does, begin with a sudden moment of clarity that leads to deeper self-awareness. Challenging purity culture and the historical silencing of women in theology, the author argues that the body is central to spiritual understanding and highlights the need for diverse voices to fully grasp the meaning of faith. Through Thecla’s courage and resistance, readers are encouraged to reclaim autonomy, speak truth, and live authentically, even when doing so defies cultural expectations. Watterson reminds us that spiritual power has always been within us, although society often teaches women to hand it over. The book concludes with additional resources, including study questions for each chapter, a meditation guide, and further reading suggestions. Watterson invites readers to reconnect with lost spiritual wisdom and their own sacred power. *—Sarah Myers*

How Not to Miss the Point: The Buddha’s Wisdom for a Life Well Lived.

By Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche.

June 2025. 184p. Shambhala, paper, $21.95 (9781611808568). 294.301.

As humans, we’re always looking for guidance. Many mainstream religions have pat answers about what to do and what to avoid, which can seem comforting for awhile. A clear path to eternal bliss is appealing. Here, Khandro Rinpoche asks an important question: Does this work? Are we truly happy or at peace with ourselves as we follow a rigid path to salvation? Khandro Rinpoche explains simple concepts like the eightfold path, delving into what each part means and how to apply it to your life in terms that relate it to other

YA Recommendations

Adult titles recommended for teens are marked with the following symbols: **YA,** for books of general YA interest; **YA/C,** for books with particular curricular value; and **YA/S,** for books that will appeal most to teens with a special interest in a specific subject.

High-Demand Hot List

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

Whether readers have been waiting a year or forty, the follow-up books on this list are sure to turn heads. Look alive, too, for buzzy debuts, a novel so big we don't know anything about it, and a new kind of story from one of America's favorite writers. —*Annie Bostrom*

Best Offer Wins. By Marisa Kashino. Celadon, $27.99 (9781250400543). Nov.
In this much-talked-about debut, real estate journalist Kashino notches the drama (and laughs) up to 11 as a woman resorts to increasingly unhinged tactics to snag the house of her dreams.

Boom Town. By Nic Stone. Simon & Schuster, $28 (9781668056271). Oct.
In her adult thriller debut, popular YA author Stone catapults readers into a gritty Atlanta underworld as a woman tries to find two missing fellow erotic dancers.

Circle of Days. By Ken Follett. Grand Central, $40 (9781538772775). Sep.
In this stand-alone from the author of wildly popular historical series, Follett imagines the lives of ancient people who created Stonehenge.

Cursed Daughters. By Oyinkan Braithwaite. Doubleday, $28 (9780385551472). Nov.
Following up *My Sister, the Serial Killer* (2018), Braithwaite introduces a woman in contemporary Lagos trying to outrun her supposed fate—her family thinks she is a reincarnated cousin—with all the help she can get.

The Eleventh Hour: A Quintet of Stories. By Salman Rushdie. Random, $28 (9798217154197). Nov.
In his first work of fiction since he was violently attacked in 2022, Rushdie offers stories of characters forming connections while confronting death in many forms.

Gone before Goodbye. By Reese Witherspoon and Harlan Coben. Grand Central, $30 (9781538774700). Oct.
The content of this first novel coauthored by two book-world heavies is tightly under wraps, but you can bet it will be a book readers will clamor for.

Jump and Find Joy: Embracing Change in Every Season of Life. By Hoda Kotb. Putnam, $30 (9798217043880). Sep.
On the heels of her retirement from *The Today Show*, Kotb ponders the major transitions of her life and studies how we can all best embrace change.

Replaceable You: Adventures in Human Anatomy. By Mary Roach. Norton, $28.99 (9781324050629). Sep.
The queen of brainy pop-science turns to the history of fixing up our breaking-down bodies with borrowed parts.

Shadow Ticket. By Thomas Pynchon. Penguin, $30 (9781594206108). Oct.
Pynchon's first novel in over a decade finds Milwaukee PI Hicks McTaggart somehow in Hungary in 1932, on the trail of a cheese heiress he's no closer to finding.

Softly, as I Leave You: Life after Elvis. By Priscilla Presley. Grand Central, $30 (9780306836480). Sep.
Priscilla last wrote about her marriage to the King in *Elvis and Me* (1985). Following the success of last year's *From Here to the Great Unknown*, by Lisa Marie Presley and Riley Keough, readers are ready for more of the story.

The Widow. By John Grisham. Doubleday, $32 (9780385548984). Oct.
The star of Grisham's next book is a lawyer, but don't expect a legal thriller: suspected for murder, Simon Latch races to find the true killer in Grisham's first-ever whodunit-style mystery.

Wreck. By Catherine Newman. Harper, $26.99 (9780063453913). Oct.
Picking up two years after the action of the mega-hit *Sandwich* (2024), Newman continues the story of Rocky and her family, with three generations cohabitating in her Western Massachusetts home.

religions (for instance, they are not unlike the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments). Easily digestible contemplations throughout the book invite readers to consider how each section can enrich their lives, almost like a guided meditation. It is easy to see why Khandro Rinpoche is a renowned Tibetan Buddhist teacher. She presents the basic principles of Buddhism in a clear, refreshing manner, making them accessible for all to understand. —*Carrie Rasak*

How to Be a Saint: An Extremely Weird and Mildly Sacrilegious History of the Catholic Church's Biggest Names.

By Kate Sidley.

Aug. 2025. 224p. Sourcebooks, $19.99 (9781728277417); e-book (9781728277424). 282.092.

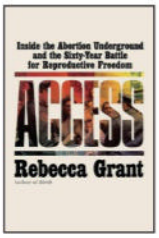
Was sainthood on your bingo card? Good news! (pun intended). With panache and humor, comedy writer Sidley walks readers through the steps that lead to canonization, starting with the rather unfortunate first one: be dead. But once you pass that threshold, there are many roads to sainthood: martyrdom, good deeds, miraculous works, even joining a convent to keep your virginity. Sometimes sainthood comes with just being in the right family—that's right, nepo baby saints. Sidley is a writer for *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, so expect the funny to be edgy. (And a bonus: Colbert, a well-regarded Catholic, writes the intro.) But along with the humor tucked into this book's frame, readers will also find history, mystery, and, of course, the lives of individual saints, including, when known, where their venerated body parts are located. Collage-style art and visual vignettes, often taken from Renaissance paintings, dot the pages. You'll learn a lot but will probably laugh even more. —*Ilene Cooper*

Social Sciences

★ Access: Inside the Abortion Underground and the Sixty-Year Battle for Reproductive Freedom.

By Rebecca Grant.

June 2025. 480p. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader, $29.99 (9781668053249); e-book (9781668053263). 363.46.

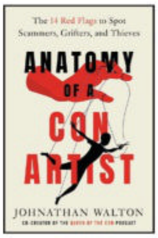

Inside the Abortion Underground and the Sixty-Year Battle for Reproductive Freedom
ACCESS
Rebecca Grant

Freelance journalist Grant (*Birth*, 2024) documents the decades-long fight for abortion access and reproductive justice in this clear and compelling blend of history and journalism. Focusing primarily on the past 60 years in the U.S., with valuable context from similar struggles in Ireland, Mexico, Poland, and elsewhere, Grant details the abortion landscape from pre-*Roe* to post-*Dobbs*. She centers the stories of activists and abortion providers who have been "engaged in direct action to help people get the abortions they need," from the infamous Madame Restell to the Jane Collective, Women on Waves, Las Libres, the TEA Fund, and many more. Her interest lies firmly in the above- and underground efforts to provide access to abortion rather than the slower, less reliable march towards enshrining reproductive rights in law. In the process, she reveals the common thread tying together generations of activists across borders, cultures, and beliefs, "a deeply held conviction that all the risks are worth it for the cause." Those seeking a well-researched, galvanizing narrative about abortion access should look no further than this engrossing account. —*Rebecca Hopman*

Anatomy of a Con Artist: The 14 Red Flags to Spot Scammers, Grifters, and Thieves.

By Johnathan Walton.

Aug. 2025. 256p. Rodale, $28 (9780593797167); e-book (9780593797174). 364.16.

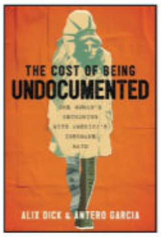


Several years ago, television producer Johnathan Walton was defrauded out of nearly $100,000 by a professional con artist. Walton brought his own con artist to justice (she went to prison), and made a podcast about it: "Queen of the Con: The Irish Heiress." Now, in this instructive book, he takes the reader through what he has identified, after years of digging into similar cases, as the "red flags" that identify someone as a con artist. For example: Be suspicious of a new acquaintance who offers to help you with a financial or personal problem. And if your new friend asks you to send them money via bank wire, don't (only con artists like to use wire transfers). The author also offers plenty of tips to avoid getting scammed: there are, for example, several inexpensive and effective ways to run background checks on your new friend. This is no generic guide written by someone who did a little research; this is a comprehensive, passionate, incredibly detailed book written by someone who has been through it himself. For fans of crime nonfiction—indeed for anyone who wants to be prepared for any eventuality—it's a must-read. —*David Pitt*

The Cost of Being Undocumented: One Woman's Reckoning with America's Inhumane Math.

By Alix Dick and Antero Garcia.

June 2025. 239p. Beacon, $28.95 (9780807014943); e-book (9780807014950). 364.1.



As conditions for immigrants, refugees, and our undocumented neighbors become ever more precarious, this book provides welcome insight and context. Dick and Garcia carefully lay out their approach to the research process as centering care and reciprocity, which—significantly—converts those who have traditionally been the subjects of research into partners who participate equally in the process as "co-constructor(s) of knowledge." This research project comes to life through coauthor Dick's story. Dick, who was hired by Garcia as a nanny for his household, narrates with a heartfelt and raw voice as she delves into the circumstances that led her from a privileged childhood in cartel-ridden Sinaloa to a precarious and vulnerable position in Georgia and later, in Southern California. This candid and often painful examination of cost includes chapters on employment, mental health, healthcare, and dreaming. Besides an accounting, Dick's story is also a propina (gift) to inspire understanding, dialogue, and action among readers. In addition to the careful explanation of their research methodology, the authors include meticulous notes and extensive references. The result is a formidable yet wholly accessible and relatable exposé of the unconscionable cost of undocumented immigration. An essential addition to all nonfiction collections. —*Sara Martínez*

The Great Chinese Art Heist: Imperialism, Organized Crime, and the Hidden Story of China's Stolen Artistic Treasures.

By Ralph Pezzullo.

July 2025. 304p. Pegasus, $29.95 (9781639369133); e-book (9781639369140). 364.16.

Beginning in Stockholm in 2010 and repeated in other European cities in subsequent years, a series of daring museum heists ex-

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BOOKS THAT WILL IGNITE HEARTS AND MINDS

BEACON PRESS

"This is the book we have waited so long for . . . It is an absolute must-read." —KEEANGA-YAMAHTTA TAYLOR, author of *Race for Profit*

AUGUST 2025

"I was riveted by this searing ode to the resiliency of the human psyche, rich in beauty and devastation." —MELISSA FEBOS, National Book Critics Circle Award winner and author of *Girlhood*

OCTOBER 2025

"Part harrowing memoir, part rigorous case study, this makes for an eye-opening glimpse of undocumented life in America." —PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

JUNE 2025

"Feldman's gorgeous debut is a love letter and a guide toward radical care, healing, and belonging." —RAECHEL ANNE JOLIE, author of *Rust Belt Femme*

SEPTEMBER 2025

GALLEYS AVAILABLE AT ALA - VISIT BEACON PRESS BOOTH 1457

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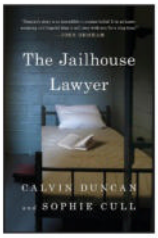
clusively targeted Chinese antiquities—Qing dynasty vases, gold and turquoise ornaments, silk wall hangings, and many other treasures. Patterns emerged. The perpetrators usually had connections to local criminal gangs. Items more valuable than the ones stolen were left unmolested, suggesting a sophisticated, surgical approach. Few showed up for sale in the usual illicit channels. It became clear that Chinese triad crime syndicates might be involved and that most artifacts could be traced back to Beijing's Old Summer Palace, which was looted and burned by British and French soldiers in October 1860, the "single largest act of vandalism in China's modern history." Were the heists all part of an elaborate (and perhaps state-sponsored) scheme to repatriate? Acts of revenge? Finding clues in the Opium Wars, Pezzullo (coauthor of the Thomas Crocker thriller series and *Inside SEAL Team Six*, 2011) situates the heists within the "deep, unhealed cultural wound" that began China's century of humiliation and continues to propel its politics. —*Brendan Driscoll*

The Jailhouse Lawyer.

By Calvin Duncan and Sophie Cull.

July 2025. 400p. Penguin, $32 (9780593834305); e-book (9780593834312). 340.092.



If Duncan's life story were a movie, there would be many points where it would reach a crescendo of vindication. It is in those times, when often minor or grotesquely bureaucratic details bear him back to the circumstances of his past, that *The Jailhouse Lawyer* will stagger readers at both Duncan's resilience and the deep flaws of the legal system. In 1982, Duncan left his hometown of New Orleans for a Job Corps station in Mount Hood, Oregon. But, as Duncan puts it, New Orleans "had a way of ruining things." New Orleans police had tracked Duncan down for a murder that had taken place before he left the city. A shaky eyewitness testimony led to a quick conviction. This is followed by decades of navigating the serpentine legal system, advocating for himself and others as a jailhouse lawyer, and crafting motions and studying case law from inside Angola's law library. While *The Jailhouse Lawyer*, written with coauthor Sophie Cull, is told from a third-person perspective, Duncan's distinctive voice shines through. The inmates he helps along the way showcase that, though Duncan's story may be remarkable, it is sadly not unique. Readers will come away changed—angry, heartened, and galvanized. —*Jeff Connelly*

The Many Passions of Michael Hardwick: Sex and the Supreme Court in the Age of AIDS.

By Martin Padgett.

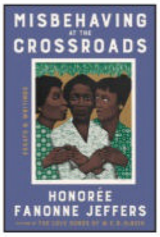
June 2025. 384p. Norton, $31.99 (9781324035411). 342.7308.

In the mid-1980s, with the gay rights movement in full swing, the ACLU was seeking a test case to challenge anti-sodomy laws. They found it in *Bowers v. Hardwick,* a case featuring an Atlanta bartender, Michael Hardwick, who was charged with sodomy for sexual activity inside his own home. Hardwick's case ended up before the Supreme Court, which upheld Georgia's sodomy law in a decision that would not be overturned until *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003. Although the case is famous, its central character remained largely unknown. In this book, Padgett brings Hardwick to vivid life, drawing on extensive interviews with his family and friends to paint a portrait of a kind-hearted artist who never intended to become an activist. A well-known party boy in his youth, Hardwick would become more introverted in his later life, creating large-scale artworks and spending time with his family and friends until he died of complications from AIDS in 1991. This book is a carefully researched, generous biography of a little-known gay rights figure. —*Jenny Hamilton*

Misbehaving at the Crossroads: Essays and Writings.

By Honorée Fanonne Jeffers.

June 2025. 368p. Harper, $30 (9780063246638). 305.48.



"There is power in her crossroads: I could take one of four journeys, and then turn back around to where she started and begin again. I can call out her two identities—Black or woman—and each would be correct." So writes poet, novelist, and essayist Jeffers (*The Love Songs of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 2021) in her captivating latest collection, which blends personal essays, historical research, social commentary, and poetry and examines the various crossroads and pathways trod by Black women. Divided into seven sections, the book delves into ancestry, Jeffers' own and that of the U.S., coupled with contemporary feminism to illustrate the unique roles Black women occupy in the story of America. Throughout, Jeffers draws on the inspiration she gathered from her mother and her family as well as her literary forebears. Whether writing about her own childhood in a poem of remembrance, processing a racist interaction in the literary world through a letter, or tracing the historical lines of her mother's experiences in the Jim Crow South, Jeffers' approach is informative, creative, elegant, and unflinching, always unwaveringly insightful and honest. This necessary addition to collections of American history, social sciences, and cultural studies cements Jeffers' significant placement in the contemporary canon. —*Allison Escoto*

Organizing America: Stories of Americans Who Fought for Justice.

By Erik Loomis.

Aug. 2025. 272p. New Press, $27.99 (9781620977873); e-book (9781620978979). 303.48.

Bringing about significant social change is difficult; it requires determination, intelligence, empathy, courage—and organizers with all those qualities and more. Loomis has pulled together a compendium of short but fascinating and informative biographies of organizers throughout American history who fought for justice. Abolishing segregation, gaining the vote for women, supporting the formation of labor unions, fighting for LGBTQ rights—wherever the American system disenfranchised or oppressed people, these individuals spent their lives organizing others to fight for a better life. Often it was a dangerous endeavor; many of those profiled were exiled, imprisoned, or killed. Businessmen would hire armies of thugs to use violence to break strikes. Law enforcement would shrug when Black men and women were lynched or killed by militant racists. Some women were institutionalized for daring to step out of the bounds of polite society. Courage was definitely a requirement. But somehow they all managed to inspire change. Some of those profiled have familiar names, like Ida B. Wells or Eugene Debs, but most have been overlooked by the history books. *Organizing America* is a worthy attempt to redress that oversight. —*Gary Day*

The Second Coming: Sex and the Next Generation's Fight Over Its Future.

By Carter Sherman.

June 2025. 320p. Gallery, $29.99 (9781668052457); e-book (9781668052471). 306.7.

Journalist Sherman, a specialist in sex and gender issues, compares trends in the sexual development of today's young Americans to that of previous generations. As she notes, the internet, the pandemic, the #MeToo movement, and the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* created a perfect storm for unprecedented interference from politicians and online juggernauts. Sherman interviewed people under 30, based on the assumption that this cohort will be the most significantly impacted by the current shift toward "sexual conservatism" and its denial of formerly assumed freedoms. She considers both the benefits and drawbacks of the online environments that have been conscripted as proxy sources of information due to the shortcomings of more traditional institutions. The author describes how inadequate sex education, restrictions on free speech, impediments to medical care and contraception, and the repudiation of new gender identities tacitly enable misogyny, bigotry, sexual harassment, and violence, especially toward marginalized groups. Sherman concludes that today's youth are remarkably informed, involved, and motivated to advocate for the sexually progressive beliefs that are now under siege. —*Joelle Egan*

Sonita: My Fight Against Tyranny and My Escape to Freedom.

By Sonita Alizada.

July 2025. 288p. HarperOne, $29.99 (9780063439009); e-book (9780063439016). 305.2309.

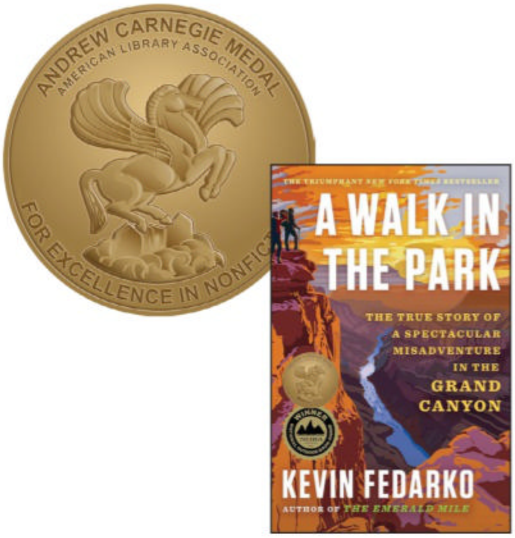
Sonita Alizada was a young girl in Herat,

Continued on p.8

The *Booklist* Carnegie Medal Interview

Kevin Fadarko

By Allison Escoto


ANDREW CARNEGIE MEDAL
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
FOR EXCELLENCE IN NONFICTION
THE TRIUMPHANT NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
A WALK IN THE PARK
THE TRUE STORY OF A SPECTACULAR MISADVENTURE IN THE GRAND CANYON
KEVIN FEDARKO
AUTHOR OF THE EMERALD MILE

Allison Escoto, head librarian and director of reading programs at the Center for Fiction in Brooklyn, and the chair of the 2025 Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence Selection Committee, had some questions for this year's winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, Kevin Fedarko. Here's their conversation.

Escoto: *One of the most captivating facets of* A Walk in the Park *is the progression from being a story about the "outrageous hubris" of two hapless people to being an immersive examination of the natural world. Did you set out to write it this way or did it expand organically?*

Fedarko: Given how truly hapless my companion, Pete McBride, and I were from the very inception of our journey, there was never a moment when it wasn't painfully clear to me that, like it or not, our incompetency and our hubris would have to serve as a central theme of the book. Sidestepping or ignoring this aspect of the story would have been dishonest, violating a central tenet of nonfiction. However, as the writing progressed and the book started taking shape, I began to appreciate that the arc of the narrative I was constructing involved not only a physical journey across a magnificent and brutal landscape, but also a metaphoric progression in which two protagonists—myself and Pete—were slowly stumbling from a place of ignorance and cluelessness toward a destination that enabled them to experience a measure of growth, humility, and perhaps, for lack of a better term, spiritual maturation. Which is a longwinded way of saying that I underwent a process familiar to many authors—one in which the book teaches the writer how the story needs to be told.

Escoto: *Your book seamlessly interweaves personal details into the narrative. How did you approach writing this way and how did it differ from your extensive work as a journalist?*

Fedarko: In some ways, the biographical dimension to this book both mirrored and drew from my earlier work as a journalist. I spent a number of years as a freelance magazine writer who specialized in adventure stories that involved personal journeys to exotic and often challenging parts of the world—Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, the Canadian Arctic, and the Himalayas. All of those stories were crafted in first-person singular, and each drew upon closely observing and recording the actions of my companions, my internal state of mind, and the beauty of the natural world. In many ways, *A Walk in the Park* was simply an extension of that approach, albeit one that involved sketching upon a canvas far larger than a single magazine story.

Escoto: *Why did you feel it was important to give a voice to the Indigenous communities you encountered throughout both your hike and your research? What do you hope readers will walk away knowing about the original stewards of the lands within the Grand Canyon?*

Fedarko: The story of the Native American tribes whom we encountered during the course of our journey forms the heart and soul of this book. There are 11 tribes whose ancestral lands either abut or lie directly inside of what is now Grand Canyon National Park, and each of those nations boasts a connection to the landscape that extends further back than most Americans can even begin to imagine. Yet, when we created this and all of our other national parks, we not only forcibly removed these people from their homes, but also wrote them out of the histories—the myths—that we have confected about how these spaces came to be, the wonders they contain, and the reasons why we should cherish them. My hope is that readers may come away from this book not only with an enhanced awareness that the Native American past is a vital part of this landscape, but with an understanding and appreciation that tribal peoples still live in and around the park today. They form an essential part of the canyon's past, very much belong to its present, and will play a key role in its future.

Escoto: *How can librarians continue to support your work and the causes that are important to you as an author?*

Fedarko: I am profoundly grateful for the many ways in which libraries and librarians support my work and the causes I care about: by promoting book clubs and reading events; by inviting me to come and speak to their communities; by generating interest through their social media channels; and, above all, by offering word-of-mouth recommendations to readers. And in doing all these things, librarians are, of course, serving the far wider and far more important goal of helping people to see and experience books for what they truly are: windows and gateways to a wider world that can expand the mind, enrich the soul, feed the intellect, and nurture tolerance among readers everywhere.

Continued from p.6

Afghanistan, when the Taliban nearly killed her brother. After her family saved enough money to flee to Iran, Alizada went from fearing being seen to needing to be seen: Afghan refugees in Iran were made invisible, segregated and discriminated against. Besides a few kind Iranians and fellow refugees, what gave Alizada hope was an NGO school, which also brought the possibility of a new story for her life. Her schooling cost her family shame, though, and they received threats. She despaired too about sisters and friends being sold into marriages that left them bruised, anguished, and without names. At great risk, she wrote and recorded a rap video opposing child marriage. Worldwide attention, including a documentary about her, brought her to the States. Over the last decade, Alizada has given much of herself to the world as an activist. Now, on her own terms, she shares her story and all that she sacrificed and gained by continuing to write it, honoring her family throughout its pages. —*Amanda Dee*

Trailblazer: Perseverance in Life and Politics.

By Carol Moseley Braun.

June 2025. 352p. Hanover Square, $32.99 (9781335523839). 328.73.

As befits the term *trailblazer*, Moseley Braun's career in and out of politics features several "firsts," most notably being the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Senate, in 1993. Although she would only serve one term in that body, Moseley Braun continued her dedication to the advancement of human rights and civil liberties through diplomatic posts, such as ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa under President Clinton and as head of the U.S. African Development Foundation, appointed by President Biden. Moseley Braun's memoir chronicles her rise from a Chicago childhood challenged by episodes of poverty, domestic violence, and near homelessness to representing her country at its highest level of international statesmanship. Along the way, she showcases the personal traits that propelled her success, credits the mentors and advocates who influenced her along the way, and candidly assesses the obstacles she faced due to societal racism, sexism, and misogyny. A forthright and impactful overview of an impressive and storied life in public service. —*Carol Haggas*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: This memoir from the first Black woman elected to the senate promises revealing episodes in recent U.S. history and is sure to generate interest.

The World's Oceans: Geography, History, and Environment. 2nd ed.

Ed. by Rainer F. Buschmann and Lance Nolde.

2025. 480p. illus. Bloomsbury Academic, $130 (9781440881589); e-book (9798765114483). 304.209.

This unique work by two historians explores the human experience with the oceans while incorporating scientific topics, too. It is divided into two sections. The first features longer essays (16–18 pages) on specific oceans and themes such as ocean boundaries, shipping, exploration, and environmental issues. The second section includes 117 shorter entries (1–3 pages) that expand on topics from the essays, covering climate change, pollution, explorers, ships, mythology, oceanic phenomena, and more. Each entry includes further reading, with occasional images, photos, or engravings. The emphasis on historical and human aspects makes this work especially valuable. However, updates in the second edition are inconsistent. While some entries include 2023–24 references, others are outdated. For example, the long essay on shipping refers to piracy data from 2011, and the entry on deep-sea exploration states that only three people have reached the Mariana Trench's bottom—true in 2012 but outdated as of 2022, when 22 people had done so. Despite this, the book remains a rich resource for examining human cross-cultural interactions and large-scale historical patterns of the oceans. —*Kevin McDonough*

Business

Confident by Choice: The Three Small Decisions That Build Everyday Courage.

By Juan Bendaña.

Aug. 2025. 240p. Ballantine, $29 (9780593725610); e-book (9780593725627). 658.3.

It can be hard to build confidence without feeling like it's forced. Entrepreneur and motivational speaker Bendaña busts this myth and helps readers waylay their self-doubt. Through coaching and research, he discovered that confidence is a skill, just like writing and cooking, and the more you practice, the better you get. Bendaña learned that making too many changes at once was not the road to success. His three-part system, "Micro-Energy," "Micro-Courage," and "Micro-Action," is a guide to help readers direct their energy to an area of improvement, move through discomfort, and complete a small action. He uses celebrity-inspired examples like Ed Sheeran to illustrate how confidence helped him build his career. Bendaña also provides a helpful "Confidence Cheat Sheet" in each chapter and a "micro-step" that offers guidance on how to flex new confidence skills. The concluding "Micro-Proof" section helps readers evaluate their progress and encourages them to continue in this new direction. Readers will find this book inspiring, helping them to let go of self-limiting beliefs that have created a barrier between them and what they want. —*Jennifer Adams*

Four Days a Week: The Life-Changing Solution for Reducing Employee Stress, Improving Well-Being, and Working Smarter.

By Juliet Schor.

June 2025. 288p. HarperBusiness, $32 (9780063382435); e-book (9780063382442). 658.3.

Bringing decades of work focused on addressing overly demanding work environments, Schor expands on her previous titles, including *The Overworked American* (1992). Pulling together collaborative research findings using data conveyed in an abundance of charts, graphs, and illuminating case studies, Schor provides a framework for successfully shifting to a four-day work week. She crafts a path forward using observations from the practical work of streamlining meetings to identifying work redundancies while considering complications, such as weeks with holidays. In today's labor climate, adopting strategies that provide for team stability, specifically retention and employee health, needs to be prioritized. The carefully crafted research here encompasses companies across a variety of industries, sizes, and global locations. Schor finds that employee retention increases, the number of sick days taken drops, and there is a reduction in the organizational carbon footprint based on reduced commute times. Changing workforce expectations and shifts in global industries are indicators of the need for the change outlined. Recommended for corporate and public library collections. —*Val Edwards*

The Spinach King: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty.

By John Seabrook.

June 2025. 368p. Norton, $31.99 (9781324003526); e-book (9781324003533). 658.4.

The saga of Seabrook Farms, a multigenerational family business founded in southern New Jersey, is told here by the grandson of its founder (also a staff writer at the *New Yorker*). Tracing the history of his family's wildly successful frozen vegetable company, Seabrook gives readers an entertaining tour through the trials and tribulations of the family during the early to middle twentieth century. Founder C. F. Seabrook was dubbed the "Henry Ford of Agriculture" in 1917 by the founder of *Forbes* magazine. Widely recognized for his innovative approach to farming, he maximized the output and efficiency of the family's farm and grew the business exponentially. A vivid and detailed accounting of the company's handling of various labor struggles gives readers a good sense of the wider impacts of immigration, migration, and racism. Family conflicts, jealousy, and betrayal eventually undermine the company's success, and the author doesn't shrink from discussing his family's most egregious behavior. A fascinating tale that will have special resonance in southern New Jersey, this book is recommended for large business collections. —*Jennifer Michaelson*

Child Care

Children of Imprisoned Parents: A Workbook for Holistic Caregiver and Child Well-Being.

By Avon Hart-Johnson and others.

June 2025. 350p. illus. McFarland, paper, $29.95 (9781476687179); e-book (9781476653501). 649.8.

While the self-help workbook format should be noted, this extremely helpful manual is designed for hands-on caregivers raising children of imprisoned parents. Mass incarceration scholar and social justice advocate Hart-Johnson presents practical information and steadying advice through a series of self-learning modules. Topics range across such broad areas as holistic well-being (managing loss, children and self esteem, communication, the importance of play), challenging issues (triggers and traumas, anger management, shame, suicide risks), and the implementation of helpful strategies (journaling, bibliotherapy). Each module identifies a focus and objectives and incorporates a case study, overview, activities, resources, references, and answer keys. With clear presentation and organizational aids, the content is further demarcated for specific age groups, from infants through adults. Hart-Johnson wanted to create an inclusive, safe space for learning and exploration, identifying her audience as family members and guardians, social workers, mental health professionals, educators, students, researchers, corrections center personnel, and community advocates. Most public and academic libraries will want to add this unique offering to their collections (along with a note that readers should use their own paper). —*Kathleen McBroom*

Health & Medicine

Mother of Methadone: A Doctor's Quest, a Forgotten History, and a Modern-Day Crisis.

By Melody Glenn.

July 2025. 211p. Beacon, $28.95 (9780807017760); e-book (9780807017753). 615.

Should doctors give opioids to people struggling with heroin addiction? Like psychiatrist Marie Nyswander, the mother of methadone treatment, Glenn believes the answer is, "Yes." Methadone is a habit-forming opioid, but Glenn, an associate professor of psychiatry and emergency medicine at the University of Arizona, argues that it's far safer than heroin or fentanyl. Her goal is harm reduction. To share Nyswander's story (and her own), Glenn uses what she calls "speculative scenes" and notes that quotes "are fictitious" unless marked as coming from interviews or articles. (Nyswander died in 1986.) Every day, over 100 Americans die of overdoses, more than die in motor vehicle accidents. As Nyswander told a journalist in 1958, addicts need to be able to come out of hiding and get treatment. And as Glenn says, patients with diabetes and hypertension take medication for many years, so why can't doctors similarly prescribe methadone for opioid addiction? This thought-provoking tale of two women and a big problem should promote debate. —*Karen Springen*

The Power in the Middle: Navigating Your Midlife with Confidence.

By Elizabeth O'Brien.

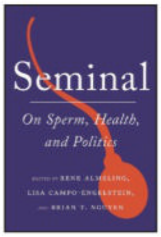
July 2025. 222p. Rowman & Littlefield, $30 (9798881805791); e-book (9798881805807). 155.6.

Licensed professional counselor O'Brien wants women to regain the fearlessness and confidence of childhood, to feel comfortable and content with themselves and be better able to handle inevitable surprises. Hormonal shifts in midlife are more pronounced in women and often tough, as fertility can be so tied to how women view themselves. O'Brien tucks in personal anecdotes. For example, when she was feeling stuck in midlife, she found herself researching tiny houses, looking for a different job, and even feeling unsure about whether she wanted to be married. (No worries: She realized she loved her husband and stayed hitched.) This guide helps women figure out how to cope with stress and, through short exercises, how to assess their wellness across mental, physical, leisure, and spiritual health and in intimate relationships. In one thought-provoking test, she lists 120 values (empathy, fidelity, timeliness, thoughtfulness) and suggests picking a personal top ten and thinking about the reasons behind the choices. A helpful guide for reflecting on personal boundaries, belief systems, meaningful activities, and values. —*Karen Springen*

★ Seminal: On Sperm, Health, and Politics.

Ed. by Rene Almeling and others.

June 2025. 352p. NYU, paper, $32 (9781479834082). 616.63.



"The study and treatment of sperm historically has taken a back seat to the oocyte," writes one contributor to this collection of 30 scholarly (but easy-to-read) short essays calling for greater attention to male sexual and reproductive health—especially issues of male infertility and contraception. Pieces cover the possible deleterious effects of environmental exposures, poor general health, and increasing age on the viability and quality of sperm and consider new methods of male contraception (beyond condoms and vasectomies). Also thoughtfully examined are the politics of reproduction, availability of home sperm tests, direct-to-consumer medications (for erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation), notions of masculinity, sperm donation, and the psychological impact of infertility. The specter of eugenics and concern over plummeting sperm counts worldwide loom large over parts of the discussion. A chapter titled "Biological Fables, Vasectomies, and the Future of Sperm after Roe" particularly stands out. Although male infertility is categorized as a disease, many U.S. health insurers do not provide coverage for its treatment. Regarding permanent contraception, an estimated 22 percent of women have surgical sterilization, while only 5 percent of men undergo it. As this collection carefully makes clear, male reproductive cells have immense social, legal, ethical, and public-health significance. —*Tony Miksanek*

Gardening

50 Plants that Changed the World.

By Stephen A. Harris.

July 2025. 320p. illus. Bodleian Library, $40 (9781851246526). 580.

Harris offers a compelling look at how various plants have shaped human civilization. Featuring full-color botanical illustrations from the Bodleian Library, this book combines visual appeal with thoughtful insight. Harris highlights plants both familiar and unexpected, such as pineapples, once used for purely ornamental purposes, and mandrakes, believed to hold magical properties. Nutmeg, now commonplace, was once at the center of global power struggles. Even everyday brassicas have surprising histories. Rather than relating one continuous history, Harris uses each plant as an entry point to examine broader themes. He draws contrasts between ancient lore and modern science, showing how beliefs evolved. He also considers how global exploration and colonization affected plant life as species were introduced to new environments and adapted through cultivation. Revealing just how deeply connected plants are to human development and encouraging a fresh appreciation for the natural world's influence on civilization, this book is well suited for plant lovers, history enthusiasts, and curious readers alike. —*Sarah Myers*

Cookery

Bitter.

By Alexina Anatole.

July 2025. 240p. illus. Interlink, $35 (9781623716059). 641.59.

It may seem odd that MasterChef finalist Anatole's book is dedicated to the sense that she defines as having a "hard, unpleasant edge." But any foodie seeking nuance and education about bitter ingredients will have fun exploring Anatole's recipes, many of which sound like they could be served at a five-star restaurant but which are all solidly achievable at home. Curry leaf mussels with Indian lager, no-churn tahini ice cream with caramelized walnuts, and a strawberry, bitter lemon, and rooibos sorbet are among the most elegant offerings. More down-home comfort foods render what's "bitter" even more approachable, from the grapefruit drizzle sheet cake that Anatole loves, to pork and cranberry meatballs and a morning porridge of rye, pear, and maple involving London porter that leaves oatmeal in the dust. Spices and coffee powder create flavor in mushroom and three-cheese quesadillas and a warming dish of allspice lamb chops with pickled walnut ketchup. Her point is well received for creative cooks: bitter foods (think beer, citrus, tahini, licorice) can be stars in the kitchen too. —*Jessica S. Levy*

Continued on p.12

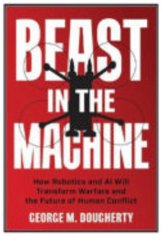
Focus on Science & Technology

Beast in the Machine: How Robotics and AI Will Transform Warfare and the Future of Human Conflict.

By George M. Dougherty.

Aug. 2025. 296p. BenBella, $29.95 (9781637747186); e-book (9781637747193). 623.4.

There is seemingly little that artificial intelligence and robots cannot do; they build cars, search the web, collate data, create images, and now join other human inventions as weapons of war. Dougherty chronicles it all in this book, giving vitally needed context to the technology. He traces the history, evolution, and application of AI and robotics in a reader-friendly way while analyzing trends for the "second generation of robotics" and beyond. *Beast in the Machine* stresses that military applications for this technology already exist and are being used today. Dougherty sees this as a positive in democratic nations because robotic weapons increase precision, limit collateral damage, and reduce suffering and the duration of conflicts. But he also warns that authoritarian regimes and nonstate actors will use them to broaden conflicts. In hypothetical exercises, Dougherty predicts the obsolescence of industrial-age platforms such as tanks and large warships in favor of dissociated swarms of armed drones contesting the atmospheric littoral zone from the ground up to 30 feet in altitude. Legacy platforms with their huge production and logistical tails cannot compete with nimble start-up companies now building robot weapons. *Beast in the Machine* is an incredible resource for raising public awareness and education around this revolution in warfare. —*James Pekoll*


BEAST
IN THE
MACHINE
How Robotics and AI Will Transform Warfare and the Future of Human Conflict
GEORGE M. DOUGHERTY

YA/S: *Younger readers will be the ones dealing with AI and robotics, and they will gain a strong understanding of the topic here as Dougherty fully explains all of his concepts and provides important context for them. JP.*

Collisions: A Physicist's Journey from Hiroshima to the Death of the Dinosaurs.

By Alec Nevala-Lee.

June 2025. 352p. Norton, $31.99 (9781324075103). 530.

This biography of physicist Luis Alvarez underscores the Nobel laureate's restless, persistent intellect and his affinity for inconvenient hypotheses on controversial topics. A precocious youth with an aptitude for gymnastics and an appetite for risk, Alvarez fell in love with the optical spectrometer and other intriguing machines in the experimental physics lab at the University of Chicago. His passion—and his tendency to see gaps in others' logic—made him a sought-after collaborator. As part of the Manhattan Project, he devised "quickie" experiments but struggled to adapt his working style and made major mistakes. The post-war years saw his biggest successes, including pioneering work in particle physics, but Alvarez found himself drawn to more sensationalistic topics, including the extinction of the dinosaurs and the physics of the bullets that killed JFK. Nevala-Lee follows his celebrated biography of Buckminster Fuller (*Inventor of the Future*, 2022) with a nuanced portrait of a driven, probing scientific soul. And if Alvarez had some blind spots, Nevala-Lee reminds us that there remains a place for unbridled scientific creativity in today's world. —*Brendan Driscoll*

Great Lives from History: Inventors and Inventions. 2nd ed.

Ed. by Mari Rich.

4v. 2025. 1,550p. illus. Grey House, $495 (9798891791688); e-book (9798891791732). 606.2.

The second edition of this volume of Salem's Great Lives from History series updates the 2010 edition with 50 new entries and updates throughout. Inventors covered here have shaped modern life, with mechanical and physical devices, processes, software, and systems across all manner of categories, from aeronautics to entertainment to sportswear. Inside this four-volume set readers can find who invented papermaking (Cai Lun, circa 105 CE) and Liquid Paper correction fluid (Bette Nesmith Graham, around 1956), the World Wide Web (Tim Berners-Lee) and e-books (Michael S. Hart), and those prolific inventors who are responsible for more than one product (Madam C. J. Walker, George Washington Carver, Leonardo da Vinci). The 457 entries are signed and written by scholars of history, science, and other relevant disciplines, include biographical information, and are divided into three parts: early life, life's work, and impact. Appendixes include a History of U.S. Patent Law, time line, biographical directory of inventors, bibliography, and several indexes. Well-organized and compulsively readable, this is a great resource for students and general readers alike. —*Susan Maguire*

YA/C: *High-school researchers will find a treasure trove of biographical information on inventors from a wide variety of backgrounds, disciplines, and historical periods. SM.*

In the Crosswinds: Birds, Humans, and the Paradox of Place.

By Eli J. Knapp.

July 2025. 240p. Torrey House, paper, $19.95 (9798890920058). 810.

This celebration of bird-watching and avian species features lovely writing, keen descriptions, and unexpected, sometimes unsettling observations. Knapp *(Dead Serious*, 2021), an environmental science professor and unabashed bird nerd, chronicles chasing down reported sightings during hasty solo excursions, student field trips in exotic locales, and family carpooling adventures around upper New York state. His multipage essays consider overall themes (wildness, navigation, munificence, miracles) while emphasizing the crucial luck and unexpected grace of being in the exact right place at the exact right time. Engaging, self-deprecating, and humorous anecdotes document Knapp's run-ins with various exotic bird and human specimens, aptly describing the elusiveness of the former and the strange interplay of camaraderie and competitiveness among the latter. Among his recent revelations is that increased wildlife smuggling and climate change-induced habitat consequences have rendered many long-established field guides to native birds obsolete, even in the face of dwindling global populations. Whether about coots, tawny frogmouths, wood ducks, or screech owls, Knapp's reflections manage to evoke wonder. —*Kathleen McBroom*

The New Age of Sexism: How AI and Emerging Technologies Are Reinventing Misogyny.

By Laura Bates.

Aug. 2025. 352p. Sourcebooks, $28.99 (9781464234361). 601.

Many regard artificial intelligence as a panacea, but Bates, founder of the UK's Everyday Sexism Project, warns that "the inequalities and oppression of our current society are being baked into its very foundations." She breaks down deepfakes, the metaverse, sex robots, AI girlfriends, and more, and describes the ramifications of each piece of technology. It's not great for women and girls. Proponents contend that a man could, for example, visit a cyber brothel and act out all of his worst sexual impulses on a robot instead of a real-life woman. But there's no evidence that this behavior doesn't escalate to real-world violence. Never mind that the technology takes away women's autonomy: deepfakes and image-based sexual abuse (aka "revenge porn") victimize women whose images are used for harm. *The New Age of Sexism* is a disturbing read—Bates doesn't shy away from the language and scenarios she witnessed in her research—but she ends with a chapter on promising solutions. As in *Men Who Hate Women* (2021), Bates presents another necessary deep dive into twenty-first-century misogyny. —*Susan Maguire*

Rope: How a Bundle of Twisted Fibers Became the Backbone of Civilization.

By Tim Queeney.

Aug. 2025. 336p. illus. St. Martin's, $27 (9781250346452); e-book (9781250346469). 623.8.

Queeney explores the history of rope from the prehistoric era to the modern day. First, he traces the likely origins of rope via archaeological finds and describes simple rope-making techniques. Rope has been used in a variety of ways throughout history, such as in the construction of large structures and in symbolism, sailing, record keeping, catching food, entertainment, punishment, and recreation. Queeney looks at multiple examples and narratives in each category, showcasing rope's many and creative uses. He includes interviews with archaeologists, historians, and practitioners and examines archival documents. Additionally, he looks at how rope's potential uses expanded with enhancements in technology into wire and synthetic materials. Queeney closes by exploring rope's utilization in the sciences, and he imagines future uses which highlight human ingenuity and rope's versatility. His enthusiasm for the subject and wry wit are evident throughout. A good addition to the growing body of work which describes the history of ordinary objects. —*Rebekah Kati*

Sally Ride: Breaking Barriers and Defying Gravity.

By Jackie Pérez.

2025. 240p. illus. ABC-CLIO, $68 (9781440874895); e-book (9798765116982). 629.45.

Sally Ride's life is much more than her status as the first American woman astronaut to go into space, as this fine biography points out. A timeline of Ride's life events opens the volume, and a lengthy introduction explains why Sally Ride matters. Pérez couches Ride's life within the context of women's changing status, civil rights, the rise in STEM fields, and attitudes towards homosexuality. Most of the content deals with her association with NASA, but lots of interesting details enrich the book: her winning tennis game, her astrophysics PhD, her women role models, publicity tours, and her role as a science educator. Each chapter includes a bibliography; photos and sidebar insights dot the book. Two appendixes provide useful context, covering women in aviation and space flight. A list of primary-source documents and an index complete the volume. The writing is very engaging and informative. This book is the latest in ABC-CLIO's series Women Making History; Sally Ride certainly belongs to that distinguished group. —*Lesley Farmer*

YA/S: *High-school audiences will be fascinated by Ride's extraordinary life and accomplishments as detailed in this engaging, informative biography. LF.*

Space to Live: The Search for an Alternative Home for Humanity.

By Roderick J. Hill.

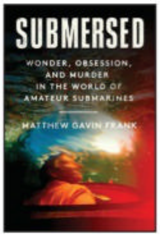
July 2025. 376p. illus. Prometheus, $29.95 (9781633889507); e-book (9781633889514). 523.4.

Scientist Hill presents fascinating theoretical and practical approaches to expanding humanity's cosmic footprint. The book begins with the search for extraterrestrial life and compelling reasons for finding alternative habitable worlds—accelerating climate change, devastating asteroid impacts, and other unpredictable global catastrophes that could threaten our species' survival. Subsequent chapters methodically explore potential settlement locations, addressing critical challenges including gravity variations, atmospheric requirements, and the physical and psychological toll of extended space travel. The author acknowledges that current propulsion technology limitations represent a formidable barrier, as journeys beyond our solar system would require decades, centuries, or even millennia to complete. Hill thoughtfully discusses speculative concepts and theoretical possibilities including anti-gravity mechanisms and warp drives that could potentially enable faster-than-light travel, dramatically reducing interstellar journey times. He provocatively considers the intriguing possibility that artificial intelligence might ultimately surpass human intelligence and become the true pioneer of space colonization, perhaps representing humanity's legacy among the stars. Featuring numerous diagrams, tables, and graphs, this thoroughly researched work provides deep insights into humanity's potential cosmic future—assuming we survive our terrestrial challenges. —*Lucy Roehrig*

★ Submersed: Wonder, Obsession, and Murder in the World of Amateur Submarines.

By Matthew Gavin Frank.

June 2025. 320p. Pantheon, $28 (9780593700952); e-book (9780593700969). 623.


SUBMERSED
WONDER, OBSESSION, AND MURDER IN THE WORLD OF AMATEUR SUBMARINES
MATTHEW GAVIN FRANK

As noted in his introduction to this scintillating investigative work, Frank did not intend to report on a true crime story when he began researching the worldwide personal submersible community. But the murder of journalist Kim Wall in a small submarine by a longtime member of that informal group could not be ignored, and so he threads the story of her efforts to cover the competition between Danish inventors into a larger tale about the allure of pushing the limits on underwater engineering and adventure. The media turned Wall's death into a sensation, but Frank's thoughtful approach resists the temptation to revel in lurid details. Instead, he delves into the intriguing history of submarines and how the lack of personal submersible regulation results in catastrophes like the implosion of the *Titan* submersible near the *Titanic* wreck site. He chronicles the misogyny and sexual harassment within the U.S. Navy submarine force, shares interviews with the almost entirely male fraternity of hobbyist fantasists and builders, and always returns to a faithful documentation of how Wall's dreams of a freelance opportunity brought her into the orbit of a psychopathic killer. Excellent for book groups, Frank's unique approach is a distinguished tour de force. —*Colleen Mondor*

A Year with the Seals: Unlocking the Secrets of the Sea's Most Charismatic and Controversial Creatures.

By Alix Morris.

July 2025. 304p. Algonquin, $30 (9781643755014); e-book (9781643755045). 599.79.

More than just a doorway to fascinating oceanic stories, environmental journalist Morris' account of her year among seals is also a mirror reflecting human impacts on nature, and human nature itself. Divided into sections corresponding with the four seasons, Morris' monograph comprehensively investigates the lives of seals and the communities that engage with them, whether by choice or by force of nature. Her genuine curiosity, paired with investigative sensibility, approaches seals from a multifaceted lens, examining their survival through scientific, conservationist, and economic perspectives, while highlighting their significance in the public consciousness. Drawing from her notable breadth of fieldwork, Morris features a diversity of voices, including those working in marine mammal rescue, Indigenous activism, and the fishing industry. With accessible prose and engrossing leads, the book links these animals to larger concerns within the ecosystem, foregrounding nature's interconnectedness. Morris' exploration of controversial issues, such as seal culling, tug at both readers' hearts and their moral compasses. Insightful, illuminating, and charming, *A Year with the Seals* may appeal to those who value uncertainty as much as curiosity. —*Lillian Liao*

Continued from p.9

Crush: My Year as an Apprentice Winemaker.

By Nicholas O'Connell.

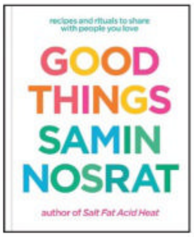
July 2025. 232p. illus. Potomac, $32.95 (9781640126312). 641.872.

Will he or won't he go pro? After a trip to France ignited O'Connell's passion for winemaking, he visits wineries in California, Oregon, and Washington to figure out what it means to be a successful, profitable winemaker. The "garagiste" (garage winemaker) cofounder of Les Copains, a co-op where grapes are crushed, fermented, topped, and racked, among other responsibilities, but not grown, O'Connell interviews more than a dozen owners and founders with questions about what barrels are best, using a single grape versus a medley, and the arts of blending and fermenting. To further bolster his decision-making, O'Connell participates in the process at the beginning and end of the creation at each location, from picking grapes to bottling. Black and white photographs illustrate his adventures and companions. As for his final decision, it could be encapsulated in the phrase, "It takes a large fortune to make a small fortune in wine making." A true and enchanting narrative. —*Barbara Jacobs*

★ Good Things: Recipes and Rituals to Share with People You Love: A Cookbook.

By Samin Nosrat. Illus. by Aya Brackett.

Sept. 2025. 464p. Random, $45 (9781984857781); e-book (9781984857798). 641.5.


recipes and rituals to share with people you love
GOOD THINGS
SAMIN NOSRAT
author of Salt Fat Acid Heat

The long-awaited follow-up to Nosrat's James Beard Award–winning *Salt Fat Acid Heat* (2017) is a collection of essential recipes and kitchen wisdom that celebrates the art of cooking as an opportunity for connection and community. For Nosrat, cooking is about sharing time and attention with the people in our lives—and paying attention to details that take foods from simple to sublime: a succulent, slow-cooked salmon; a bowl of perfectly seasoned popcorn; a slice of yellow cake with chocolate frosting that is exactly what you remember from childhood. It's about looking in your pantry for basic ingredients to make satisfying meals, and having an array of incredibly flavorful condiments, toppings, and dressings to add variety. Many of the recipes are traditionally written, with meticulous measurements and techniques, but just as often, Nosrat steps away from the expected recipe format and acts as a joyful guide, most notably in a large section dedicated to seasonal produce, where each fruit or vegetable is treated to its own shopping tips, suggested cooking methods, and endlessly creative variations and flavor combinations. Adventurous home cooks will appreciate the firm foundation of knowledge that ultimately offers the freedom and confidence to experiment and create special foods to share. —*Jane Harper*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: *SFAH* and its resulting Netflix series made Nosrat a bona fide celebrity, and this cookbook has been promised for years. Order up!

My Creole-Cali Kitchen: Louisiana Roots with California Flavors.

By Ryan Rondeno.

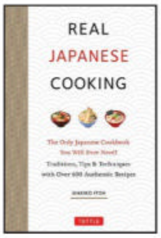
July 2025. 312p. illus. Agate, $36 (9781572843516); e-book (9781572848962). 641.59.

Chef Rondeno has cooked for celebrities, offered meal-prep services, and created his own line of spices. In this cookbook devoted to his New Orleans Creole–California fusion cuisine, Rondeno takes readers along on his personal culinary journey and introduces new and exciting food combinations along the way. His instructions are approachable, and his warmth and love of cooking radiate off the page. The recipes are unique and creative, and maintain their New Orleans roots with a California flare, for example langostino and avocado toast with fresno chile chèvre and fried chicken livers with pepper jelly and soft goat cheese grits. Those used to a more casual way of cooking may be put off by the dressed-up nature of these dishes, but Rondeno reassuringly breaks things down for readers and makes it all approachable. Fans of Creole cooking, California favorites, and fusion cuisines, and those just looking for a little something different will enjoy this book. —*Nataya Culler*

★ Real Japanese Cooking: Traditions, Tips, Techniques and over 600 Authentic Recipes.

By Makiko Itoh.

July 2025. 512p. illus. Tuttle, $39.99 (9784805316153); e-book (9781462925421). 641.5.



Blogger and cookbook author Itoh (*The Just Bento Cookbook*, 2011; *The Bento Lunchbox*, 2024) calls her latest "the only Japanese cookbook you will ever need," and makes good on that promise as she takes the time to explain not just recipes but the culture, ingredients, celebrations, and beliefs behind Japanese foodways and customs. Itoh is amazing at explaining Japan's appreciation of its food and the history behind it, from how dashi and rice form the foundation of Japanese cooking to the history of bread in Japan. With love and care Itoh goes over each ingredient: its uses, how it came to Japan, how it's cooked, and if it's used in celebrations. Without making assumptions about readers' previous knowledge of Japanese culture and cuisine, Itoh comes off like a helpful, friendly mentor. Notable recipes include potato and onion miso soup, agedashi deep-fried tofu, bamboo shoot rice, basic shokupan, and Japanese strawberry shortcake. Lovers of Japanese food who have hesitated from cooking it themselves will appreciate how easy it can be to make their favorite dishes with Itoh's well-laid-out recipes: instructions are numbered, ingredients divided into sections, and key points highlighted. A perfect introductory book for anyone looking to learn Japanese cooking. —*Nataya Culler*

The Arts

Claire McCardell: The Designer Who Set Women Free.

By Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson.

June 2025. 336p. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (9781668045237); e-book (9781668045251). 746.9.

The life and innovative work of American fashion designer Claire McCardell get well-deserved recognition in this biography by journalist Dickinson. Born in 1905 in Maryland, McCardell moved to New York City in 1925 to attend the School of Fine and Applied Art (now the Parsons School of Design) for a course of study that included nine months in what was then the center of fashion, Paris. The revolutionary bias-cut designs of the House of Vionnet, celebrating the natural shape of a woman's body, inspired McCardell. Her style integrated naturalness with innovations like pockets, accessible zippers, and hoods in women's separates and sportswear. She pioneered the use of materials like denim in women's clothing and created the modern bathing suit. A groundbreaker in business, she became the first American woman to have her name on a label of ready-to-wear garments. Dickinson engagingly integrates McCardell's work and life with the evolution of the fashion industry and American society from the 1920s through the 1950s. Even the least fashion-conscious reader will appreciate learning about Claire McCardell's accomplishments. —*Laurie Unger Skinner*

The Devil Wears Rothko: Inside the Art Scandal That Rocked the World.

By Barry Avrich.

June 2025. 240p. illus. Post Hill, $30 (9798888454527); e-book (9798888454534). 759.13.

Like he did in the 2020 documentary *Made You Look*, Avrich shines a light on a dark corner of the art world in an account of the greed, deception, and forgery that brought about the closure of the Knoedler Gallery, the oldest and most prominent gallery in New York. In lively and vivid prose, he recounts how the gallery's president, Ann Freedman, facilitated the sale of counterfeit paintings by Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and others to unsuspecting wealthy collectors. When the fraud came to light, many of the victims settled out of court, but Domenico De Sole, who purchased a fake Rothko for $8.3 million, took his case to the trial that resulted in one of the art world's greatest scandals. Avrich does a fine job of establishing the context of the contemporary art market and portraying real-life fraudsters, collectors, forgers, conspirators, and more. He also provides new facts and presents new characters that have surfaced since his film's release.

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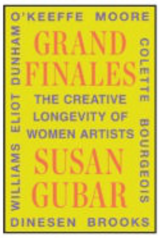
A fascinating account of a historic art crime that will appeal to art lovers and true crime buffs. —*Carolyn Mulac*

Grand Finales: The Creative Longevity of Women Artists.

By Susan Gubar.

June 2025. 384p. illus. Norton, $35 (9781324065647); e-book (9781324065654). 709.2.

After writing landmark studies about women writers as well as memoirs, including *Late-Life Love* (2018), Gubar, grateful for her own advanced years after surviving and chronicling her battle with cancer, investigates attitudes toward older women and the factors that facilitate a “creative old age.” At once rigorous and captivating, Gubar offers fresh, incisive, and engaging accounts of the later years of nine determined and audacious writers, poets, visual artists, a musician/composer, and a dancer/choreographer. In “Lovers,” she delves into the complex relationships with much younger men that enhanced the productive lives of George Eliot, Colette, and Georgia O’Keeffe. In “Mavericks,” we see Isak Dinesen, Marianne Moore, and Louise Bourgeois reveling in and benefiting from their roles as very different grande dames. In “Sages,” Gubar chronicles the resounding transformations embraced by Mary Lou Williams, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Katherine Dunham, as their commitment to social justice recast their own work and inspired them to become innovative educators and activists. In each piquant and profound portrait, facts, quotes, and analysis converge in enlightening and enlivening narratives laced with perceptive musings about womanhood, age, poverty, health, misogyny, sexual abuse, racism, courage, creativity, and the key to late-life creativity: a sense of mission. —*Donna Seaman*



It’s (Almost) Always Sunny in Philadelphia: How Three Friends Spent $200 to Create the Longest-Running Live-Action Sitcom in History and Help Build a Network.

By Kimberly Potts.

July 2025. 336p. illus. Gallery, $29.99 (9781668008508); e-book (9781668008522). 791.4572.

Entertainment journalist Potts takes a close look at the popular sitcom *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, from its very humble beginnings in the early aughts to its growth into an enduring, 16-seasons-and-counting pop-culture hit. Centered around a group of self-serving proprietors of a dive bar, the show got its start when a trio of struggling writer-actors—Rob McElhenney, Glenn Howerton, and Charlie Day—decided to do their own financing to film a pilot for a show set in LA and called *It’s Always Sunny on TV*. When FX greenlit the show for a six-episode first season, they moved it to Philly and eventually expanded the cast, first adding Kaitlin Olson to play Dee, the twin sister of Howerton’s Dennis and then, in season two, bringing in screen legend Danny DeVito as Frank, the twins’ father. Potts takes a deep dive into the exploits of The Gang, from their most outrageous outings to aging showrunners to the most devoted fans (including one who took a life-sized cardboard cutout of Frank to her prom). A delight for *It’s Always Sunny* lovers. —*Kristine Huntley*

YA/S: *Teen fans of The Gang’s outlandish, offensive, and hilarious adventures will enjoy this close look at the show. KH.*

Judy Garland: The Voice of MGM.

By Scott Brogan.

June 2025. 416p. illus. Lyons, $65 (9781493086542); e-book (9781493086559). 782.42164092.

In Judy Garland’s all-too-brief life (she died at 47), she performed in vaudeville, movies, and on the concert stage. Her vaudeville performances are a thing of memory, but the movies and concert recordings are, happily, still available. In this celebratory volume, Brogan, webmaster of *The Judy Room*, presents her with the fervor of a fan and the faithfulness of a fact-checker. He notes that her career at MGM illustrates “both the good and the bad of classic Hollywood more than any other star.” However, he decries what he calls “the one-dimensional image of always suffering and always tragic Garland,” and says that “[s]he was an inherently positive, joyous and funny human being.” That person comes alive in this rich and detailed story of Garland and iconic MGM musicals like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, and *Easter Parade*. Brogan includes her MGM filmography, a list of MGM prerecordings and records, a list of her Decca records, and extensive notes and bibliography. A worthy addition to film and performing arts collections and a treat for Judy Garland and classic movie musical fans alike. —*Carolyn Mulac*

Make It Ours: Crashing the Gates of Culture with Virgil Abloh.

By Robin Givhan.

June 2025. 336p. Crown, $35 (9780593444122); e-book (9780593444139). 746.92092.

Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Givhan (*The Battle of Versailles*, 2015) reflects on the intersections of race, tastemaking, power, and fashion in her new biography of Virgil Abloh (1980–2021), a polymath who earned degrees in engineering and architecture before collaborating with Nike on an iconic collection of sneakers and winning one of the most coveted roles in fashion, artistic director at Louis Vuitton. Abloh emerges as genial, savvy, and brilliantly creative, but Givhan uses his “extraordinary career trajectory” to tell a story that goes beyond the individual. She acknowledges and details the vast web of pathbreakers (like fashion designers Patrick Kelley and Ozwald Boateng, known for his exquisite tailoring), mentors (including graphic designer Peter Saville), and collaborators (most notably Kanye West) who made Abloh’s meteoric rise possible and, in some cases, dedicates full chapters to them. This refreshing take on biography celebrates individual achievement by placing it in a dynamic social and cultural context. It is just the right treatment for Abloh, who, as Givhan argues, built his design career by celebrating and facilitating community. —*Maggie Taft*

Sharing in the Groove: The Untold Story of the ’90s Jam Band Explosion and the Scene That Followed.

By Mike Ayers.

July 2025. 416p. illus. St. Martin’s, $33 (9781250287458); e-book (9781250287465). 781.64078.

In this generous oral history, Ayers (*One Last Song*, 2020) steps aside and allows musicians, crew members, managers, and record label executives to swap stories and spill secrets about the thriving American jam band scene of the 1990s. Some bands, like The Spin Doctors, attained massive success but struggled to maintain it, while others, like God Street Wine, hovered perpetually on the brink of mainstream recognition. Meanwhile, Phish and Widespread Panic mastered the art of longevity, building sustainable careers through relentlessly touring and cultivating an unwavering fan base. Jam bands forged collaborative ventures like the H.O.R.D.E tour: “None of us were big enough to do it on our own,” reflects Blues Traveler guitarist Chan Kinchla. His bandmate, frontman John Popper, adds that the legendary touring festival was, in its early days, largely attended by coyotes and “emaciated hippies.” *Sharing the Groove* offers a captivating look at the ways in which this cohort of creatives navigated the music industry during its final wave of major-label-signing sprees—before the digital revolution reshaped the landscape. —*Freda Love Smith*

SHARING IN THE GROOVE
MIKE AYERS
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE '90s JAM BAND EXPLOSION AND THE SCENE THAT FOLLOWED

Stan and Gus: Art, Ardor, and the Friendship That Built the Gilded Age.

By Henry Wiencek.

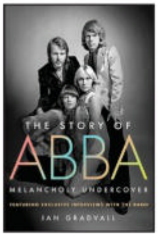
July 2025. 304p. Farrar, $29 (9780374162498); e-book (9780374713256). 720.97470904.

The intertwined biographies of two Gilded Age artists reveal a complex relationship in electrifying, turbulent times. Known for his Civil War statues and the sleek, gleaming Diana of the Tower, Augustus “Gus” Saint-Gaudens was one of the era’s most prominent sculptors. Stanford “Stan” White, architect of Greenwich Village’s iconic Washington Arch, designed Fifth Avenue mansions and Long Island getaways for the Gatsby set. The men were very much opposites. Stan was dashing and sociable, a “sensation seeker” driven by powerful appetites. Gus, by contrast, was intense and ascetic, moody and tormented. Following a theatrical initial meeting, they “came together like two sticking plasters.” Though both would marry others, Stan and Gus would remain intimate for 30 years, until Stan was murdered by a Pittsburgh millionaire whose wife he had allegedly raped when she was a teenager. Highlighting his subjects’ larger-than-life personalities, the imbalances of their relationship, and the glittery, careening mess of their era, Wiencek (*Master of the Mountain*, 2013) ultimately celebrates the artistic impact Stan and Gus' relationship would have upon New York City. —*Brendan Driscoll*

The Story of ABBA: Melancholy Undercover.

By Jan Gradvall.

June 2025. 336p. illus. St. Martin's, $30 (9781250379856); e-book (9781250379863). 782.42166.



Gradvall, an award-winning Swedish music journalist and author, and an ardent ABBA fan, brings contagious enthusiasm to this written tribute, drawing on research and years of close journalistic work with the group. Gradvall tells the stories of "the Abbas," Benny, Frida, Bjorn, and Agnetha; four Swedes joined by music and, at times, marriage. Growing up in post-war Europe, their lives were marked by poverty, transience, and becoming parents as teenagers. The music of the time—folk, classical, skiffle, and the token pop song on Swedish radio—shaped them. Gradvall takes readers back to ABBA's 1974 breakout Eurovision performance of "Waterloo," channeling the energy of the tune and the impact of their outlandish disco style. Gradvall deciphers ABBA's signature sound: soprano voices, nearly joined, with keyboard-based instrumentation that recalls the melancholy accordion of the "vodka belt." ABBA topped charts worldwide, remained iconic in the gay community, is admired by artists as diverse as U2 and Nirvana, and propelled the musical *Mamma Mia* to record runs. If, as Gradvall writes, "a good album cover brings the artist closer to the listener," it's also true that good writing brings the artist closer to the reader. Gradvall masterfully recounts ABBA's story and outsized influence over 50 years of popular music. —*Kelly Fojtik*

What Is Wrong with Men: Patriarchy, the Crisis of Masculinity, and How (of Course) Michael Douglas Films Explain Everything.

By Jessa Crispin.

June 2025. 288p. Pantheon, $27 (9780593317624); e-book (9780593317631). 791.43.

Crispin, a keen, original, and intrepid social critic, has explored gender and power dynamics in previous works, including *My Three Dads: Patriarchy on the Great Plains* (2022). Drawing on astute research, intellectual clarity, and droll wit, she now tracks the crumbling of the patriarchy in a bravura performance pegged to Michael Douglas' "blockbuster" movies of the 1980s and 1990s. Shrewdly parsing such films as *Fatal Attraction*, *Wall Street*, *Black Rain*, and *The Game*, she zeros in on how Douglas' characters suffer "injury, oppression, and confusion" as gender roles are overturned and male privilege is dismantled. She contrasts the great divide between how women banded together to fight sexist inequality by organizing and supporting each other, and how men, floundering and feeling isolated, blamed others (including immigrants) for their disorienting predicament while stewing in anger, resentment, and reactionary fantasies. Crispin sympathetically pinpoints the pressures men faced as American masculinity was tied to the corporate template of winners and losers while also taking measure of extreme misogyny, cultish military groups, and male "grievance culture," all stoked by podcasts and social media. A cogently argued and thought-provoking inquiry. —*Donna Seaman*

Crafts & Hobbies

65 New Christmas Balls to Knit: Make Your Own Nordic-Inspired Heirloom Decorations.

By Arne & Carlos.

July 2025. 128p. illus. Search, paper, $23.95 (9781800923355); e-book (9781800933224). 746.43.

For knitters and other needleworkers, it's never too early to talk about the holidays. Norwegians Arne Nerjordet and Carlos Zachrisson, the authors of *55 Christmas Balls to Knit* (2010) and many other books, who are on a first-name basis with their readers, offer yet another 65 Christmas ball patterns with classic Fair Isle designs from the heart of Scandinavia. Guidelines upfront will help intermediate knitters navigate the instructions, made up of color photographs and graphs, while each of the six sections adds commentary on Scandinavian holiday traditions, such as the first snowfall, depicted in fir tree, snowflake, and figure skating ornaments. In the flora and fauna chapter, the authors remind all to feed birds in winter with the bullfinch, titmouse, and robin designs. And there's Santa Lucia, whose celebration on December 13, Norway's longest night of the year, begins the Christmas season. As a bonus, the authors include seven traditional biscuit recipes, from gingerbread to cardamom. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Sewing with Heavy Duty Fabrics: Practical Projects to Last.

By Laura Sinikka Wilhelm.

July 2025. 160p. illus. Search, paper, $25.95 (9781800923171); e-book (9781800933033). 646.2.

These 18 projects from Wilhelm (*Stylish Sewing*, 2010) are intended to go with any style, décor, or fashion, thanks to their minimalist design and the types of materials used (many of which are sustainable too). Though simple is the mantra, and the range of difficulty is narrow—from one (easy) to three (hard)—first-time sewers might not be able to complete many of the designs, especially if they don't own sewing machines and aren't familiar with their operation. And Wilhelm's fabrics are truly heavy duty: leather, waxed cotton, canvas, oilskin, upholstery fabrics, denim. Nonetheless, the designs are eye-catching, with good instructions and color photographs, and include canvas baskets for any room, a canvas fireplace log carrier, and pouches for tool belts and bicycles. Tips run the gamut, from lifting pots out of the hanging basket before watering to using glue and binding screws to affix thick leather. Includes a glossary and list of stockists for UK, U.S., and worldwide. —*Barbara Jacobs*

Sports & Recreation

Runs in the Family: An Incredible True Story of Football, Fatherhood, and Belonging.

By Sarah Spain and Deland McCullough.

June 2025. 336p. Simon Element, $30 (9781668036280); e-book (9781668036303). 796.334.

In 2017, years after learning that he was adopted, Deland McCullough decided to seek out his birth parents. Injuries had prevented McCullough's dream of playing in the NFL from becoming reality. His childhood had been tough, filled with moments of violence and destitution, but he was determined to make something of himself. Now a well-respected football coach with a wife and four kids, he would often wonder about his biological family. He yearned to break free of the generational trauma that had plagued his family for decades, and realized that learning more about who he was would help him. He was overjoyed when he discovered the identity of his birth mother. But the truth about his father would upend his life in ways he never could have expected. This book expands on coauthor Sarah Spain's viral 2018 ESPN article about McCullough. The majority focuses on McCullough's drive to succeed and the work, physical and mental, he does to not repeat his parents' mistakes and instead to focus on being the best man he can be. The result is a book about trauma, family, and hope, threaded with moments of profound sadness and unbelievable joy throughout. Even non-sports fans will love this incredible story. —*Stephanie Howes*

Literature

Baldwin: A Love Story.

By Nicholas Boggs.

Aug. 2025. 720p. illus. Farrar, $32 (9780374178710); e-book (9780374721343). 818.

Literary giant James Baldwin was a transformative voice for Black liberation throughout his long and varied life, and his essay collections, including *The Fire Next Time*, remain powerful explorations of American racism and African American calls for accountability. Yet many admirers of Baldwin prefer to downplay or even camouflage his homoerotic writings, particularly in the novels *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country*. In this comprehensive, emotional biography, Boggs positions Baldwin's romantic history squarely at the center of his literary and political work, chronicling the parallel developments in Baldwn's art and in his relationships. A perennial outsider due to both his race and his queerness, Baldwin sought acceptance in France, where his love affairs with European artists Lucien Happersberger and Yoran Cazac inspired some of his greatest work, and his mentor, painter Beauford Delaney, helped him grasp the fundamental connection between racism and homophobia. These relationships gave Baldwin the confidence to write *Go Tell It on the Mountain,* a novel set in Harlem but written at the snowy alpine retreat Baldwin shared with Happersberger. Based on extensive interviews with many Baldwin associates and family members, this is an emotionally rich and complex look at a writer who exemplifies the impossibility of separating the personal from the political. *—Lesley Williams*

Becoming Baba: Fatherhood, Faith, and Finding Meaning in America.

By Aymann Ismail.

July 2025. 272p. Doubleday, $28 (9780385549615); e-book (9780385549622). 810.

Before he was born, Ismail's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Egypt. One of 12 children, his mother came to America to assist her pregnant sister, while Ismail's industrious father found success as a chauffeur. Ismail gave short shrift to his parents' devout Muslim faith as an adolescent. While his older siblings were on the path to successful careers, Aymann acted up at school and adopted the punk persona. He was irked by his parents' decision to move the family from Newark to South Brunswick, New Jersey, even if was done in his best interest. Eventually, Ismail developed a flair for photography that he turned into a career in journalism—working for *Slate,* among other publications—while getting married and starting a family of his own. Candid, with moments of humor, poignancy, and soul-searching depth, *Becoming Baba* is an engaging memoir about a man's winding path to maturity, enlightenment, and self-discovery. *—Philip Zozzaro*

The Dry Season: A Memoir of Pleasure in a Year Without Sex.

By Melissa Febos.

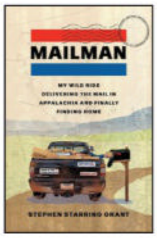
June 2025. 288p. Knopf, $29 (9780593537237). 814.

In the aftermath of a harrowing, obsessive relationship (chronicled in *Abandon Me*, 2017), Febos (*Body Work*, 2022) embarked on a period of celibacy, a plan that drew both eyerolls and nods of self-recognition from her closest friends. This searching, cerebral memoir chronicles the experiment, which turned out to be not a "dry season" but "the most fertile of my life since childhood." Febos created an "inventory" of past relationships, turning over stones to unearth countless new epiphanies. She found guidance from a lineage of faithful kindred spirits, from medieval beguines and mystic nuns through Simone Weil and Audre Lorde, even visiting the homelands of Hildegard von Bingen and Virginia Woolf. Closing off the possibility of sexual connection, Febos found within herself "a light that shone not on specific objects, but illuminated everything in proximity." Also inspired by her idols to "write like a demon," University of Iowa professor Febos does so, dizzily. A consummate builder of words and conveyer of ideas, Febos' keen writing about sex, gender, and addiction is in a class of its own. *—Annie Bostrom*

★ Mailman: My Wild Ride Delivering the Mail in Appalachia and Finally Finding Home.

By Stephen Starring Grant.

July 2025. 304p. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (9781668018040); e-book (9781668018064). 810.



One fateful day in March, 2020, Grant was laid off from his consulting job, forcing him to turn back to his home in Blacksburg, Virginia. For Grant, this loss of employment, and accompanying health insurance, was especially complicated by his recent prostate-cancer diagnosis. It seemed, then, a part-time job as a rural carrier for the U.S. Postal Service was the perfect stopgap. As detailed in his memoir, the job was physically punishing, emotionally draining, and certainly underpaid. *Mailman*, though the myriad particulars of the job are given their due deference, is not just a workplace story detailing the trials of the apprentice letter carrier. Grant's tenure delivering the mail across his rural Virginia home is certainly shaped by the unease of the pandemic and its effects on both the general mood and the increased volume of packages. The book, though, is infused with Grant's gift for finding humor and humanity, highlighting the naturally charismatic cast of postal workers and customers that made the job so transformational. A coming-of-age (at middle age) story and a firm commendation for all of the mail carriers, clerks, and inspectors who make the USPS such a venerable and efficient organization, *Mailman* more than delivers. *—Jeff Connelly*

No Sense in Wishing.

By Lawrence Burney.

July 2025. 320p. Atria, $29.99 (9781668051856); e-book (9781668051870). 814.

The art that stays with us—music, photography, literature—often feels like it reached us at the exact moment in our lives when we needed it most. In this essay collection, Burney explores those encounters in his own life, from his childhood involvement in the Baltimore music scene to the career as a music critic he would build in adulthood. Burney's love of music is deeply intertwined with his friends, his family, and the Baltimore neighborhoods where he grew up. In each essay, he combines his personal connection to the art with a deep knowledge of the social contexts that surrounded each work's creation and shaped its reception. Burney's tastes are wide ranging: he's as apt to zoom in on the work of specific Baltimore neighborhoods as he is to explore the Nigerian artists making it big on the international stage. A frank and joyous celebration of Black art as well as a musical coming-of-age story, *No Sense in Wishing* will appeal to fans of Shea Serrano's *Hip-Hop (and Other Things)* (2021) and Danyel Smith's *Shine Bright* (2022). *—Jenny Hamilton*

Secret Agent Man.

By Margot Singer.

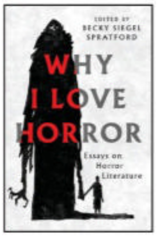
June 2025. 170p. Barrow Street, paper, $20 (9781962131070). 814.

This striking collection features essays that grapple with conflicts of perception and truth. Shifting through moments in Singer's life, the nine essays delve into the complexities of coming into one's own alongside the blurs—and illusions—of memory. In the title work, Singer attempts to connect with her father to fill in the truths of his past. Though he worked as an independent consultant, his elusiveness about his career during her childhood made for a long-held whisper that he was a spy. "Afterimage" follows Singer and her young family as they are packing up their Utah home for a significant move to the Midwest, evoking an exploration into the unyielding impermanence of time. With "Ghost Variations," Singer's relationship with an artist, and the enigmatic shift in their connection, is twined with the love triangle of composers Johannes Brahms and Robert and Clara Schumann. "God's Eye" captures the dizzying transitions of life post-college, as Singer confronts the realities of a long-distance relationship and emergence into "real life" adulthood. Singer's richly textured essays eloquently capture life's weighty pulls. *—Leah Strauss*

★ Why I Love Horror: Essays on Horror Literature.

Ed. by Becky Siegel Spratford.

Sept. 2025. 272p. Saga, paper, $18 (9781668205099). 814.6.



"Horror isn't just a genre, it's a calling," writes Sadie Hartmann in her introduction to this fine collection of essays that delves deep into the appeal of the macabre. Spratford, well-known in the library world as a horror expert, has gathered the most important voices in the genre today—Brian Keene, Stephen Graham Jones, Tananarive Due, and more—and invited them to respond to the simple titular prompt. The results are illuminating, moving, and inspiring. Many of the authors were scared kids or faced trauma (Cynthia Pelayo's harrowing tale comes to mind) and found comfort in the monstrous. Gabino Iglesias reflects on his grandmother's belief in ghosts and spirits. Alma Katsu, who worked for "a few three-lettered government agencies," talks about what historical horror can teach us about the present. Nuzo Onoh describes how horror helped her escape the real-life terrors of the Biafran War. Rachel Harrison masterfully relates the terror of low-fat yogurt. Each essay is put into context with an introduction by Spratford, who, like a good librarian, also provides read-alikes for each author. A treasure trove for readers of horror, this collection will also serve as a useful readers' advisory tool and may convince the horror-curious to give the genre a try. —*Susan Maguire*

Poetry

End of Empire.

By Marissa Davis.

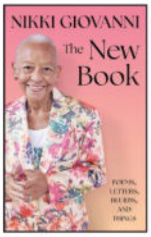
July 2025. 128p. Penguin, paper, $20 (9780143138471); e-book (9780593512548). 811.

"I am learning to love myself a little better here / & that means knowing / what I deserved," writes Davis in her first full-length collection. It's a rich, sprawling work that nods toward biblical and mythological references, history, and rural landscapes—all of which place the speaker or speakers against a time line of injustice as well as a reclaiming of the wild, persistent self. The collection's four sections allude to books of the Bible but subvert any expectation, as Davis deploys her innovative approach to language and inquiry. The work moves with a wise and deliberate eye, creating a visceral resonance of meaning ("a violence remembering / that in the beginning / any word could be named / a conjugation / of love"). The poems look closely at politics, a Kentucky childhood, the Black body, and human resilience with a skill that maps the interconnectedness of people, place, and consequence across time. When Davis writes, "what will have been the impact of the lyric," one is encouraged to return for repeated and close examinations of a truly beautiful work. —*Sara Verstynen*

The New Book: Poems, Letters, Blurbs, and Things.

By Nikki Giovanni.

Sept. 2025. 144p. Morrow, $24.99 (9780063447523); e-book (9780063447509). 811.



"Poems are a good idea." So writes the acclaimed Giovanni in this collection of poetry and short prose, a remarkable final addition to the undeniable legacy of the award-winning poet and activist. Represented here is a mixture of timely topics, both personal and political, all imbued with the signature style that became synonymous with Giovanni over her more than 50-year career. Whether elegantly painting a quotidian scene, "And I sit / With patches of cloth / And snickles of cake / And just a little bit / Of cold red wine / Waiting for Jason / To come home"; entreating her readers to vote and "Find the courage / To help rid us all / Of the festering mold in the white house"; or writing an elegy to a lost friend, Giovanni invites readers into her pieces to experience the pain and joy of the world as she saw it. Reading this collection is not only a reflection on the topics at hand and on the author's friendships and moments of her life; it is also a paean to the extraordinary writing of a beloved and deeply influential writer. —*Allison Escoto*

Ocean of Clouds.

By Garrett Hongo.

June 2025. 112p. Knopf, $28 (9780593802038); e-book (9780593802045). 811.

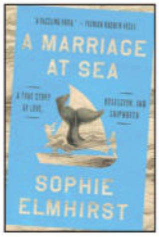
Poet, memoirist, and audiophile at-large Hongo (*The Perfect Sound*, 2022) extracts glossy memories from the sands of time in this collection of ruminative verse. The slow pace of Hongo's elongated lyrics luxuriates in fine details of interior domesticity, such as the "big living space filled with two couches, a tv on a rolling stand, / Huge museum-sized paintings hung above a long, low bookcase" of poet Michael S. Harper's home. Many poems serve as homage, oftentimes to Hongo's literary acquaintances and influences, including music critic Stanley Crouch ("my mentor in jazz and arrogance"), multi-genre writer Al Young (an artful orison recalls "soul and shamisen from the living room stereo"), and acclaimed author Robert Hayden, with whom the speaker recalls a garden conversation, "fresh from Japan and my monastery year." Japanese poetic forms and California cultural mash-ups define the collection, often through acoustic collaboration: "rice and Rasta / on the dance floor at Dorsey High, / Motown and min'yō our common mix-tape." Equal parts clear-eyed retrospective and passionate narration, Hongo's latest provides notation on a storied and euphonious career. —*Diego Báez*

Geography & Travel

A Marriage at Sea: A True Story of Love, Obsession, and Shipwreck.

By Sophie Elmhirst.

July 2025. 256p. Riverhead, $28 (9780593854280); e-book (9780593854303). 910.452.



An award-winner and best-seller in the UK, where it was released in 2024 as *Maurice and Maralyn*, this stranger-than-fiction true story opens with an otherworldly wreck. Ending the night watch on their sailboat somewhere in the Pacific early on a March morning in 1973, Maralyn Bailey goes below deck to wake her husband, Maurice, and feels "a crack, a jolt, the sound of a gun going off." From the deck, the couple can see a sperm whale, bleeding and writhing in distress. Überprepared as they are, the married sailors can't save their boat, which they had planned to take from England all the way to New Zealand. They gather their emergency supplies onto a raft and hope for rescue. As the days tick on, reaching the triple digits, the suspense is almost unbearably high, what the couple weathers truly unbelievable, and the book impossible to put down. British journalist Elmhirst nimbly and skillfully relates the story's intensely dramatic moments while folding in the couple's history. Almost every page underscores that Maurice and Maralyn, who met and married in Derby, England, in 1962 and quickly realized that typical English life—possibly any life on land—was not for them, were made for each other. A jaw-dropping and gripping survival story. —*Annie Bostrom*

History

Allies at War: How the Struggles between the Allied Powers Shaped the War and the World.

By Tim Bouverie.

June 2025. 672p. Crown, $38 (9780593138366); e-book (9780593138373). 940.54.

Bouverie (*Appeasement*, 2019) offers readers drama, intrigue, and mordant wit as he recounts "the politics and diplomacy of the incongruous alliance that ultimately defeated Hitler." With vivid writing and diligent research—hobbled by confusingly microscopic asterisks to footnotes—Bouverie examines the alliances and rivalries of all Allied and neutral nations during WWII, going beyond the UK, the U.S., and the Soviet Union. While Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin have been extensively quoted, career diplomats are rarely heard from in WWII histories. Bouverie quotes American diplomats Adolf Berle and William Bullitt, whose insights about Russian objectives offer perspective on President Putin's covert and open aggression from Norway to Ukraine. Bouverie writes nail-biting descriptions of battles in Africa and the Middle East that, had the Allies lost, could have changed the war's course. He also devotes attention to imperialism, colonialism, and European racism. The Allies misunderstood and lied to each other, miscalculated, and flip-flopped. Nevertheless, Bouverie's wit and eloquence prove Churchill's observation—and the book's epigraph—"There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies and that is fighting without them." —*John Rowen*

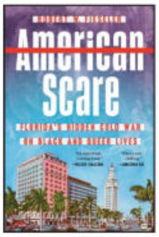
American Scare: Florida's Hidden Cold War on Black and Queer Lives.

By Robert W. Fieseler.

June 2025. 496p. illus. Dutton, $32 (9780593183953); e-book (9780593183977). 975.9.

Journalist Fieseler (*Tinderbox,* 2018) delivers a historically corrective text, bringing to light a cruel and unjust period of Florida history. Between 1956 and 1965, the state government empowered and funded (with close to half a million dollars) the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (FLIC), aka the "Johns

Committee," so called for its leader, Charley Johns. Often using suspected communism as a justification, the FLIC targeted and terrorized U.S. citizens, particularly educators, who were Black, and/or queer or accused as such. Many of these targeted citizens were dismissed from their employment, faced legal and familial consequences, and were driven from the state in shame. Fieseler's book is a dense, fascinating, essential piece of scholarship that restores a forcefully obscured record. The work is meticulous, and readers will encounter a plethora of facts: names, dates, laws, votes, and governmental procedures. For 30 years, Johns Committee scholar Bonnie Stark kept and secretly protected 21 bankers boxes with un-redacted records of the FLIC. In 2021, she handed them over to Fieseler in a parking lot. The legacy of the FLIC extends through Anita Bryant to Ron DeSantis and continues to affect Florida today. All readers, in every state, have a right to this masterwork of journalism. *—Emily Dziuban*



The Aviator and the Showman: Amelia Earhart, George Putnam, and the Marriage That Made an American Icon.

By Laurie Gwen Shapiro.

July 2025. 512p. Viking, $35 (9780593295908); e-book (9780593295915). 973.9.

In this gossipy dual biography of aviator Amelia Earhart and her husband, publisher George Putnam, Shapiro (*The Stowaway*, 2018) sets out to right what she purports has been a biographical history of errors "about every single aspect" of Earhart's life and death. Drawing on archived records, diaries, and interviews with the couple and those who knew them, Shapiro crafts a narrative that is often surprisingly intimate about their thoughts and feelings. She builds a case that Putnam was a cunning mastermind of Earhart's image, while Earhart, a pilot whose technical skill at times was overwhelmed by her husband's ambition, was less a dedicated aviator than someone determined to stay in the public eye and keep "the money flowing." There is much here about their romantic relationship, with Shapiro focusing heavily on Putnam's first marriage to Dorothy Binney, a Crayola heiress, which ended amidst accusations about his infidelity with Earhart. While certainly presenting a new perspective on Earhart, Putnam emerges as a stronger character and someone deserving of his own dedicated biography. *—Colleen Mondor*

The Beast in the Clouds: The Roosevelt Brothers' Deadly Quest to Find the Mythical Giant Panda.

By Nathalia Holt.

July 2025. 288p. Atria/One Signal, $29.99 (9781668027745); e-book (9781668027769). 973.911.

In 1929, Ted and Kermit Roosevelt, sons of former President Theodore Roosevelt, led an expedition to China in search of the elusive giant panda bear. Sponsored by the Chicago Field Museum, the mission's goal was to bring back a complete specimen for taxidermy and display. As Holt (*Wise Gals*, 2022) deftly recounts, for both the brothers and those who accompanied them, the trip ended up changing their lives. Their accomplishments were great, but the fallout from the expedition would be nearly catastrophic for the panda, as it quickly became a target for big game hunters around the world. Hunters' use of the Roosevelts' published maps to find the animal was especially devastating for Kermit, who became an ardent conservationist in the years that followed, during which he also struggled with addiction. Holt draws on the Roosevelts' book, *Trailing the Giant Panda* (1929), reports from other expedition members, interviews, and media coverage to tell a grand tale of adventure and high drama. Both stirring and tragic, this is an excellently told story about an overlooked segment of history. Highly recommended for book clubs. *—Colleen Mondor*

Black Soldiers, White Laws: The Tragedy of the 24th Infantry in 1917 Houston.

By John A. Haymond.

July 2025. 400p. illus. Atlantic Monthly, $30 (9780802164759); e-book (9780802164766). 976.4.

America's entry into WWI required a massive expansion of the military. One of the new posts built near Houston was guarded by a battalion from the army's storied Buffalo Soldier regiments. While the newcomers were welcomed by the settled Black community, white Houstonians insisted on strict enforcement of Jim Crow segregation laws and greeted their new neighbors with abuse. Haymond began researching "the Houston incident" of August 23, 1917, as a chapter for a book on military law but turned the project into a six-year quest for truth and justice. *Black Soldiers, White Laws* is an in-depth legal examination of the violence that left 19 civilians and policemen dead and led to the court martial of over 100 soldiers and 19 executions. This book leaves no stone unturned, illustrating the climate of race relations, war, and military justice, with a thorough look at all the principal characters in the story. Haymond's prose is engaging and dense with facts, making *Black Soldiers, White Laws* a powerful statement about a shameful event in the U.S. Army's history. *—James Pekoll*

The Boys in the Light: An Extraordinary World War II Story of Survival, Faith, and Brotherhood.

By Nina Willner.

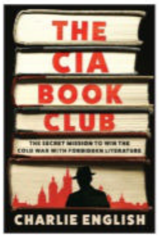
July 2025. 384p. illus. Dutton, $35 (9780593471272); e-book (9780593471289). 940.531.

In *The Boys in the Light*, Willner recounts the incredible, true story of her father, Eddie Willner, a German Jew who survived the horrors of the Holocaust. This gripping narrative intertwines a deeply human tale of resilience, unity, and moral strength with a timeless reflection on the fight against hatred. The story follows Eddie's harrowing experiences in Auschwitz, where he and his father endured the brutalities of Nazi oppression, leading to a daring escape with a fellow inmate, Mike. Meanwhile, American soldiers Elmer Hovland and Sammy "Pepsi" DeCola were advancing across Europe, unknowingly moving toward a fateful encounter with Eddie. Set against the backdrop of WWII, the book captures Eddie's extraordinary determination and the unity that defined his survival, alongside the kindness and courage of the U.S. soldiers who aided him. After the war, Eddie and Mike started new lives in the U.S., embracing opportunities and rebuilding with remarkable strength. A powerful testament to humanity and perseverance, *The Boys in the Light* is an unmissable story for WWII–history enthusiasts. *—Dominic J. Caraccilo*

★ The CIA Book Club: The Secret Mission to Win the Cold War with Forbidden Literature.

By Charlie English.

July 2025. 384p. illus. Random, $35 (9780593447901); e-book (9780593447918). 909.825.


THE CIA BOOK CLUB
The Secret Mission to Win the Cold War with Forbidden Literature
CHARLIE ENGLISH

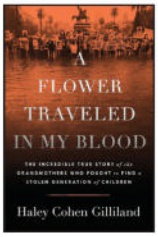
English (*The Gallery of Miracles and Madness*, 2021) shares a story about Miroslaw Chojecki's heroic efforts in the early 1980s to break the USSR's stranglehold on his beloved Poland through the large-scale distribution of writings by the likes of George Orwell, Hannah Arendt, Philip Roth, John le Carré, and later, by pro-democracy writers from Poland, the USSR, and the rest of the Eastern bloc. "Do you think your little words will make a difference?" asked his father, a former WWII Resistance fighter. "Would you prefer me to shoot someone?" Miroslaw replied. Remarkably, the CIA would play a huge part in financing that distribution, applying soft power with deftness and moral authority even as the agency reeled from recent public revelations that it had assassinated, or attempted to assassinate, a range of foreign leaders, among other misdeeds. English lays out the complexity of this massive distribution network—from CIA funding to acquiring writings, sourcing printers and supplies, and assembling staff to carry out the mission—all undertaken in great secrecy and at huge personal risk. Many other factors were at work in pulling down the Iron Curtain, as English makes clear here, but also clear is the CIA's unrecognized success in advocating for democracy and the rule of law against overwhelming odds. *—Alan Moores*

★ A Flower Traveled in My Blood: The Incredible True Story of the Grandmothers Who Fought to Find a Stolen Generation of Children.

By Haley Cohen Gilliland.

July 2025. 512p. Simon & Schuster/Avid Reader, $30 (9781668017142); e-book (9781668017166). 982.

Journalist Gilliland's first book is the true story of the Argentinean grandmothers who stood up against a tyrannical political regime in order to find the people that the government was disappearing. It is a recounting of Argentina's Dirty War (la guerra sucia) that took place during the 1970s and '80s and the circumstances that led to the military takeover of a country rife with political dissent. This book is certainly not easy to read, relating both personal stories of those who were disappeared and those who set out to find them as well as the political circumstances surrounding the leaders of the government and the civilians they set out to trample. The book opens with a vivid description of a citizen witnessing a disappearance and goes on to share the story of Patricia Julia Roisinblit from her birth to the destruction of everything she held dear. *A Flower Traveled in My Blood* is an unflinching playbook of what happens when a government's tyrannical impulses are fed as well as a heartbreaking, immersive account of what it means to stand up against injustice and demand that those who allow it move out of the way. —*Lily Hunter*


A FLOWER TRAVELED IN MY BLOOD
THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY of the GRANDMOTHERS WHO FOUGHT to FIND a STOLEN GENERATION of CHILDREN
Haley Cohen Gilliland

Forgotten Landscapes: How Native Americans Created Pre-Columbian North America and What We Can Learn from It.

By Stanley A. Rice.

July 2025. 234p. illus. Prometheus, $29.95 (9781493088669); e-book (9781493088676). 972.801.

Forgotten Landscapes provides a wonderfully accessible overview of what we know about Native American agricultural and land-management practices in the pre-Columbian era. Chapters dedicated to irrigation, orchards, and controlled burns help readers confront their own biases about Indigenous knowledge and civilization. Additionally, Rice covers general history, noting that early European colonists observed and documented not only these techniques but also things like Cherokee and Iroquois laws and societies which would go on to influence the creation of American democracy. He then details how offensive that makes the position and policy of appropriating Native American land and justifying it by saying that, since Indigenous people had no culture and weren't making proper use of the land, it was the responsibility of white Americans to take and farm it correctly. The book wraps up with a discussion of how bringing Indigenous practices back requires care, since we have changed the land so thoroughly with invasive species and artificial environments. Anyone interested in learning more should dig into the extensive bibliography. A fascinating work filling an important niche. —*Sarah Rice*

Fuji Fire: Sifting Ashes of a Forgotten U.S. Marine Corps Tragedy.

By Chas Henry.

June 2025. 320p. illus. Potomac, $36.95 (9781640126459). 952.04.

When a typhoon hit the Marines' Camp Fuji in Japan on October 19, 1979, 5,000 gallons of gasoline spilled and sparked the greatest peacetime disaster in the Corps' history. Thirteen Marines lost their lives and many more were injured. *Fuji Fire* is the first book-length examination of the fire, which was quickly overshadowed by and forgotten after the Iranian Revolution and the plight of American hostages. Henry conducted exhaustive interviews with the people involved, and conducted analysis of archival material to illustrate the camp's layout, meteorological methods, fuel storage regulations, traumatic burn medicine, and relief efforts relating to the fire at that time. He does not spare the reader from the morbid details of the victims' injuries or treatment. The details are treated as straightforward reporting, but Henry shows the human side of the tragedy through gut-wrenching, emotional descriptions of the families' struggles. *Fuji Fire* is a first-class book about a little-known yet terrible event. It is also a heartwarming story of people coming together across cultures, nations, and institutions to help each other in a time of need. —*James Pekoll*

The Gunfighters: How Texas Made the West Wild.

By Bryan Burrough.

June 2025. 448p. Penguin, $35 (9781984878908); e-book (9781984878915). 976.4.

Central to the portrayal of the legendary Wild West in popular culture is the gunfighter reaching for his weapon to settle disputes. Burrough (*Forget the Alamo*, 2021) explores the role Texans have played in shaping the image of the Old West while busting myths along the way. As he contends, prior to the Civil War, in absence of functioning law enforcement, Southerners turned to the honor code, which emphasized honesty, courtesy, and bravery, and resulted in an occasional duel. With Reconstruction came more violence across the region. In Texas, violence reached a different level, resulting in the establishment of a new code. "The Code of the West produced violence that was more feral, more instantaneous, and often more deadly." Further, as the frontier and the cattle industry moved westward, so did many Texans. Among iconic gunfighters discussed are Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, and Billy the Kid. Texans also have a reputation for being great storytellers, and Burrough is no exception. With this latest work, he creates a lively, riveting adventure for western history fans. —*Melanie Dragger*

The Hiroshima Men: The Quest to Build the Atomic Bomb, and the Fateful Decision to Use It.

By Iain MacGregor.

July 2025. 448p. Scribner, $32 (9781668038048); e-book (9781668038062). 940.54.

The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 are credited with ending the Allied war with Japan, but the lingering effects are still being understood. The 1938 discovery of nuclear fission in Berlin, along with the grave possibility of the Nazis generating a nuclear weapon first, spurred the U.S. to develop the atomic bomb. A top-secret project was undertaken with interlocking parts across the country. The project required a stern taskmaster to oversee it, while brilliant scientists monitored the potent, unstable components of a weapon of mass destruction. As the war in the Pacific dragged on, the decision to utilize the bomb became clear. *The Hiroshima Men* is a well-researched study of how warfare was forever changed with the dropping of Fat Man and Little Boy. MacGregor (*Checkpoint Charlie*, 2019) deftly chronicles the key figures involved in U.S. government and the military who helped end a war while ushering in the tense nuclear age that followed it. —*Philip Zozzaro*

JFK: Public, Private, Secret.

By J. Randy Taraborrelli.

July 2025. 592p. illus. St. Martin's, $35 (9781250346384); e-book (9781250346391). 973.922092.

In this, his sixth biography of the Kennedy family and its various members, journalist and historian Taraborrelli focuses on the person at the center of it all, JFK. Following the same format as in his best-selling *Jackie: Public, Private, Secret* (2023), Taraborrelli eschews standard biographical structure in favor of nonlinear vignettes to capture the man behind the myth. The result is a profoundly humanized portrait of a son, brother, husband, lover, friend, candidate, politician, and, ultimately, president. With more than 25 years of historical research on which to draw, even including interviews with aides and colleagues from the original Kennedy sphere who were still alive at the time of writing, Taraborrelli's powerfully resourced biography offers incomparable observations from those who knew him well and saw him at his best and worst. Access to such personal source material allows Taraborrelli to chart JFK's metamorphosis from callous youth to compassionate leader, through periods of rank ambition and crippling self-doubt. Decades later, as the U.S. and the world again finds itself teetering on the brink of existential crisis, the ethos demonstrated through Kennedy's public speeches and private musings resonates even more deeply. A welcome addition to the ever-fascinating Kennedy canon. —*Carol Haggas*

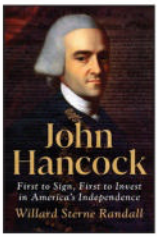
J. RANDY TARABORRELLI
JACKIE
JFK
Public, Private, Secret

John Hancock: First to Sign, First to Invest in America's Independence.

By Willard Sterne Randall.

June 2025. 288p. illus. Dutton, $34 (9780593472149); e-book (9780593472156). 973.3.

With clear, vivid writing, prolific historian Randall (*The Founders' Fortunes*, 2022) brings alive the life and times of Boston patriot John Hancock. After graduating from Harvard at 17, Hancock was brought by an uncle into the family's international trading business, where he had a gift for spotting the next big thing, such as sending whale oil to England on fast ships. He shared his wealth generously with Bostonians, Harvard, and the new Continental government. Randall reveals that, as president of the Continental Congress, Hancock's greatest achievement was not signing the Declaration of Independence with an outsized signature. Rather, it was his appointment of the "dream team" of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman to write the Declaration. After the Revolution, as Massachusetts governor, Hancock relieved crushing taxes on farms and small businesses, funded education, and repealed puritan morality laws. His wife, Dorothy "Dolly" Quincy Hancock, meanwhile capably assumed Hancock's executive duties when gout incapacitated him at the Continental Congress, and she played a vital role in strengthening the Franco-American alliance. Also detailing Hancock's relationship with Sam Adams (a puritan, despite modern beer associations), Randall offers excellent accounts of the events of the time, especially of the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. —*John Rowen*



Joy Goddess: A'Lelia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance.

By A'Lelia Bundles.

June 2025. 368p. Scribner, $29.99 (9781416544425); e-book (9781501154133). 974.7.

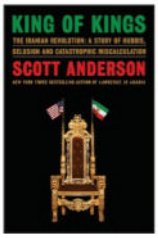
In her latest work of biography, Bundles (*On Her Own Ground*) turns her attention to A'Lelia Walker, Bundles' great-grandmother and heiress to Madam C.J. Walker's fortune. Born into poverty during the Reconstruction era, A'Lelia Walker ascended to the upper echelon of Black life via her mother's unparalleled business acumen. Together, the two women built a beauty empire during a period of profound social change and racial oppression. With 1920s Harlem as a backdrop, the mother-daughter duo navigated the pains and successes of a family business, becoming community leaders in the process. Bundles' voice is brisk and curious, nimbly leading readers through the relationships and historical currents that created the Harlem Renaissance. Her personal connection to the Walkers pays off via an expansive number of primary sources. In addition to being useful for scholars of the time period, it makes for an engrossing history as readers are invited to luxuriate in the details of Walker's life. —*Zeja Z. Copes*

★ King of Kings: The Iranian Revolution: A Story of Hubris, Delusion, and Catastrophic Miscalculation.

By Scott Anderson.

Aug. 2025. 512p. illus. Doubleday, $35 (9780385548076); e-book (9780385548083). 955.05.

Perhaps lost in the mists of history, under the shah of Iran's 38-year reign (1941–79), as veteran journalist Anderson explains, per capita income in that country increased twentyfold, the literacy rate quintupled, the average lifespan increased from 27 to 56 years, freedoms for women surpassed those found elsewhere in the Islamic world, protections were granted to the country's minorities, and the country emerged as an economic and military powerhouse. Yet as Anderson lays out with meticulous reporting and consummate storytelling, many of Iran's spectacular gains—and along with them, its once-inviolable alliance with the U.S.—came undone with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the ascent of Ayatollah Khomeini. *Delusional* might best describe both sides before the denouement: the shah for his obscenely lavish lifestyle and willful distancing from the lives of everyday Iranians, and the U.S. for the paltry effort it made, given its massive financial and military investment, to maintain its ties to the Iranian people. For example, as late as 1978, the State Department's DC-based Iran desk comprised just two secretaries and an intern, the author reports. Though the Iranian Revolution unfolded more than 45 years ago, the now-fraught U.S.-Iran relationship remains front and center, and there are still hard-won lessons to glean about the costs of inattention. —*Alan Moores*


KING OF KINGS
THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION: A STORY OF HUBRIS, DELUSION AND CATASTROPHIC MISCALCULATION
SCOTT ANDERSON

Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War.

By Gerri Willis.

June 2025. 288p. Harper, $28.99 (9780063333659); e-book (9780063333659). 973.7.

The single most valuable weapon in any spy's arsenal is their invisibility, something Elizabeth Van Lew knew and exercised to brilliant effect. Van Lew was from a wealthy and socially prominent family that had moved to Richmond, Virginia, some years before the Civil War, but her values remained firmly Northern and abolitionist, something she had to keep hidden when the South seceded and hostilities began. She was determined to help the Unionist cause, and since Richmond was the Confederate capital, she knew she was perfectly placed to learn of the Confederacy's war plans. And she knew that Southern culture could never see a proper Southern belle as any sort of danger. It took a while for the North to see her value, as well, but eventually they admitted that over time she had built the most effective spy ring in the war, with Lincoln and General Grant admitting her spy work had been essential to winning the war. Van Lew's story is fascinating, though sometimes her historical narrative gets sidetracked by ancillary players. But in the end, her heroism, which came at great personal cost, is given its due. —*Gary Day*

The Roma: A Traveling History.

By Madeline Potter.

July 2025. 272p. Harper, $27.99 (9780063337664). 909.

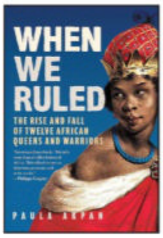
For centuries, the Roma have been subject to negative stereotypes and persecution. Scholar Potter is Romani, of the Kalderash vitsa, and aims to raise awareness of her people and their traditions. In this part-memoir, part-history, part-travelogue, Potter tells a history of the Romani that has largely been forgotten or ignored. Her goal is to address and correct prominent stereotypes of the Romani and bring attention to the long history of Romani discrimination, including the deportation of the Romani to concentration camps during the Holocaust and their period of enslavement in Romania. She describes the lives of Romani living in Britain, elsewhere in Europe, and the U.S. and includes explanations of subgroups, customs, and traditions. Throughout, Potter interweaves her own experiences with prejudice as a Romani woman and describes her visits to Romani communities. Potter tells folk stories and celebrates prominent Romani cultural icons and activists in a style which evokes the oral traditions of her people. A fascinating and heartfelt tribute to a misunderstood people. —*Rebekah Kati*

★ When We Ruled: The Rise and Fall of Twelve African Queens and Warriors.

By Paula Akpan.

June 2025. 320p. Pegasus, $32 (9781639368877); e-book (9781639368884). 960.

Colonial-era Western histories and postcolonial African accounts either ignored the role of elite women in African societies or distorted them for propaganda purposes. In *When We Ruled*, British historian Akpan recounts the histories of a dozen African queens and warriors from around the continent—including Nana Yaa Asantewaa, who led the Asante people against British colonizers and combined both roles. Akpan merges storytelling with anecdotes about her personal research visits to nearly all the homelands of the women she writes about. By interspersing her journey to archives and museums with re-created narratives, she illustrates how tentative and subjective our understandings of these often misunderstood or forgotten women leaders are. One example is Njinga a Mbande, a nonbinary ruler whose legacy was distorted and denied by the Portuguese colonizers they resisted for years. Akpan complicates the sterile, often nationalist myths that surround some of these near-mythic leaders while also acknowledging the ways in which colonial biases and Western historiographic traditions distorted their stories and silenced their voices. Those interested in the issues swirling around African history as well as feminist and LGBTQ+ perspectives will welcome her approach, which challenges old certainties and complicates pat narratives. —*Kirk Johnson*



Adult Fiction

General Fiction

The Alchemy of Flowers.

By Laura Resau.

July 2025. 352p. Harper Muse, paper, $18.99 (9781400349098).

Arriving in Provence, Eloise is looking forward to caring for the flowers hidden inside the walled Gardens of Paradise. After her recent experiences with infertility issues and the breakup of her marriage, Eloise is ready to embrace the intensely restrictive rules required for her new position. Inside the gate, Mina, Bao, and Raphaël are waiting to introduce her to life off the grid and to tending the unique flora and fauna without angering the darker elements of the Garden. Despite a good salary, supportive new friends, a blossoming romance, and a range of lovely flowers, Eloise can't dismiss the feeling that danger lurks in Paradise. Information about the language of flowers and their medicinal properties, good and bad, cleverly ties threads together and adds to the sense of mysterious unease growing in the Garden. The comfort of a found family, acknowledgment of the past traumas each Garden caretaker is working to overcome, the shared fear of malediction, and the dramatic resolution, make for a page-turning gothic tale. —*Stacey Hayman*

As You Wish.

By Leesa Cross-Smith.

June 2025. 368p. Penguin/Tiny Reparations, paper, $19 (9780593476185); e-book (9780593476208).

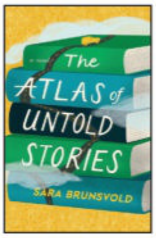
As she shares in this charming and heartwarming novel, Cross-Smith (*Goodbye Earl*, 2023) is a big fan of K-dramas. Three young women—Lydia, Selene, and Jenny—travel to Seoul as au pairs. They become fast friends when their three host families travel to Jeju island, and each woman makes a wish at a supposedly magical waterfall: Lydia, to be more confident; Selene, to find her Korean birth mother; and Jenny, to never fall in love again. Overnight, everything seems to change. Lydia is suddenly the most popular person in her art class, though the one person she really wants to impress is totally aloof. Selene finds the woman—and her handsome and helpful son—who delivered Selene to the orphanage. And Jenny starts a seriously hot (though mostly off-page) relationship with her host mom's brother, but it's just physical—or is it? While resolutions are somewhat predictable, and the drama is short-lived, it hardly matters, as readers root for all three of the au pairs to find love and fulfill their wishes. —*Kathy Sexton*

YA: *Teen K-drama fans will appreciate the youthful au pair protagonists set in Seoul and the slightly magical energy of this romantic read, so long as they're comfortable with discussion of off-page spice. KS.*

The Atlas of Untold Stories.

By Sara Brunsvold.

June 2025. 352p. Revell, paper, $18.99 (9780800746124); e-book (9781493450541).

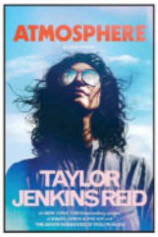


Chloe Vance is eager to begin her overseas missionary work but dreads breaking the news to her strict mother, Edie, and older sister, Lauren. Hoping to ease the blow, Chloe convinces them to join her on a book-based road trip across the Midwest, praying she will find the right words along the way. But the journey reveals more than expected. Lauren's life is unraveling, Chloe is pulling away, and Edie fears losing both her daughters and the identity she's built around motherhood. As miles pass and tensions rise, long-held facades begin to crack, exposing pain, love, and the possibility of healing. *The Atlas of Untold Stories* is a stunning novel for anyone who has ever feared not measuring up, especially within families. Its compelling road trip narrative set against the backdrop of Midwest literary landmarks follows three women struggling to see and be seen. Themes of self-worth and the inherited ideologies of acceptance and value unfold alongside the grounding Christian message of God as the source of wholeness and direction in a disoriented world. Sara Brunsvold's lyrical prose is meant to be savored, as she breaks open buried wounds and tenderly pieces together the ordinary and imperfect beauty of being human. —*Kate Campos*

Atmosphere: A Love Story.

By Taylor Jenkins Reid.

June 2025. 352p. Ballantine, $30 (9780593158715); e-book (9780593158722).



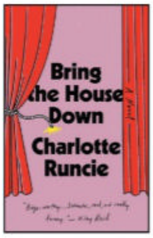
Reid (*Carrie Soto Is Back*, 2022) returns with a wildly entertaining yarn about a group of NASA astronauts in the early 1980s. Astrophysicist Joan Goodwin enters the space program in 1980 with aspirations to be chosen for a space shuttle mission. Perpetually single and deeply devoted to her younger sister and beloved niece, Joan soon finds herself embroiled with her fellow hopefuls, including John "Griff" Griffin, who's sincere and handsome—and interested in Joan; abrasive, competitive Lydia Danes, who very much wants to be the first woman in space; and beautiful, confident Vanessa Ford, who longs to put her piloting skills to use in space but faces resistance. Joan, who has secretly wondered if romance is not in the cards for her, is thrown off-kilter when she falls hard for one of her fellow astronauts. Reid interweaves the story of Joan and her friends working towards their goals with a 1984 mission that goes disastrously awry, putting multiple lives in jeopardy. Reid's latest is thrilling, immersive, and moving; she delivers everything readers have come to expect from her, against the backdrop of life-or-death stakes in the space program and anchored by a beautifully explored queer romance. Sure to be a summer—and beyond—blockbuster. —*Kristine Huntley*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Reid is practically a household name since Daisy Jones took over shelves and screens. Readers will be thrilled to grab her first novel in three years.

Bring the House Down.

By Charlotte Runcie.

July 2025. 304p. Doubleday, $28 (9780385551076); e-book (9780385551083).



Art critic Sophie Rigden isn't expecting offstage drama when she goes to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with her young colleague, Alex Lyons, a theatre critic known for his scathing one-star reviews. But when Alex writes one of his signature blistering appraisals of a one-woman show and then sleeps with Hayley Sinclair, the writer/performer of said show, the night before the review comes out—without her knowing he's a critic—it sets off a shocking chain of events. Upon discovering Alex's identity and the review, Hayley changes the content of her show, calling it The Alex Lyons Experience and revealing what Alex did and how it affected her. Her revamped show gets attention and rave reviews—and draws out women Alex has wronged in the past. Alex watches his career go up in flames even as he defends himself, asserting that the response is disproportionate, and Sophie is caught up in all of it, finding herself Alex's confidant and presumed ally, even as she grapples with her complicated feelings about him, her own career, and her role as a partner and mother. A sharp, absorbing, thoroughly entertaining send-up of gender politics, the dynamic between critics and artists, and the struggle for women to balance careers and motherhood. —*Kristine Huntley*

Cheesecake.

By Mark Kurlansky.

July 2025. 240p. Bloomsbury, $26.99 (9781639735723); e-book (9781639735730).

In this novel from prolific food nonfiction author Kurlansky, greed drives Greek immigrant Art to acquire Manhattan real estate, evicting residents to hike up rents. One such unlucky tenant, former caterer Mimi, earns just enough to warrant an unaffordable rent increase. Leading up to the eve of her eviction, Mimi decides to host one last dinner party, planning to astound guests with Cato's cheesecake. Named for Cato the Elder of ancient Rome, the recipe is interwoven into lives throughout the novel—Art once commanded his sister-in-law to make this the centerpiece dessert in his family's restaurant. The ancient recipe contains few instructions and a blur of ingredients. Like landlord's rights, it's mostly left up to interpretation. Fictional life mirrors reality, so there is no perfect ending for Kurlansky's vibrant characters. But Cato's cheesecake allows them to thrive in spite of the odds stacked against them. This tale will reward fans of the Tales of the City series, who will enjoy the twinge of irony served alongside a story of rich, Manhattan-infused life and honey-laced, fresh goat's milk cheesecake. —*Jessica S. Levy*

The Convenience Store by the Sea.

By Sonoko Machida. Tr. by Bruno Navasky.

July 2025. 304p. Putnam, $29 (9798217045433).

In the popular feel-good mode, best-selling Japanese writer Machida offers a charming tale centered on the Koganemura branch of the Tenderness convenience store in the Mojiko port section of the city of Kitakyushu. So attractive and charming is Shiba, the store manager, that an associate, Mitsuri, is working on a manga series about him called *The Phero-Manager's Indecent Diary*. But what really makes the Tenderness store click is the workers' generous servings of empathy. Located in the bottom floor of a building with mostly seniors as residents, the store offers a clean dining area, a daily bento lunchbox special, and a socializing opportunity. The meal also helps store employees check on infirm residents by keeping track of lunch absences. Interconnected vignettes about the workers, customers, and families deliver a touch of whimsy and plenty of heart. Joys and sorrows bring everyone together, even those just passing through. In an age in which loneliness is an epidemic, the people at Tenderness show that the definition of community can be exactly what you need it to be. —*Poornima Apte*

The Dance and the Fire.

By Daniel Saldaña París. Tr. by Christina MacSweeney.

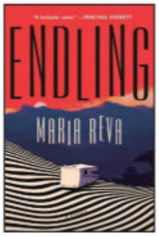
July 2025. 256p. Catapult, $27 (9781646222452).

As wildfires surround Cuernavaca, a metropolis a few hours south of Mexico City, vibrant and ambitious friends (and occasional lovers when they were in high school) Natalia, Erre, and Conejo face the angst and ennui of middle age as their paths cross and diverge across a dystopian landscape. Natalia crafts the other axis of Saldaña París' intriguing novel: a performance inspired by Swedish "witches" who danced on Blockula island in the seventeenth century, boding nada bueno (nothing good) for the city. Each friend narrates one part—first Natalia, entranced by her bromeliads and fed up with the older lover she lives with; then Erre, back in his childhood bedroom, in chronic pain and reeling from a recent divorce; and finally, Conejo, who never left Cuernavaca, and who cares for his father, an academic who has gone blind. Conejo provides a sort of nucleus for the other two, along with weed. Poignant and compelling, this lyrical translation of Saldaña París' depiction of youth foundering into maturity against the backdrop of chaos, hysteria, and destruction is a solid add for all literary collections. —*Sara Martínez*

★ Endling.

By Maria Reva.

June 2025. 352p. Doubleday, $28 (9780385545310); e-book (9780385545327).



This is absurdist literary fiction about a sympathetic cast of characters (including a fictionalized version of the author herself) caught in the chaos of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. Yeva, a beautiful, asexual snail scientist, is forced to join a matchmaking agency to pay for her conservation work. There, she encounters sisters Sol and Nastia, who plan to kidnap the agency's customers (the bachelors) as a form of radical protest in the hope that their feminist, activist mother will acknowledge them and come out of hiding. Yeva agrees to let the sisters use her mobile lab–RV to transport the

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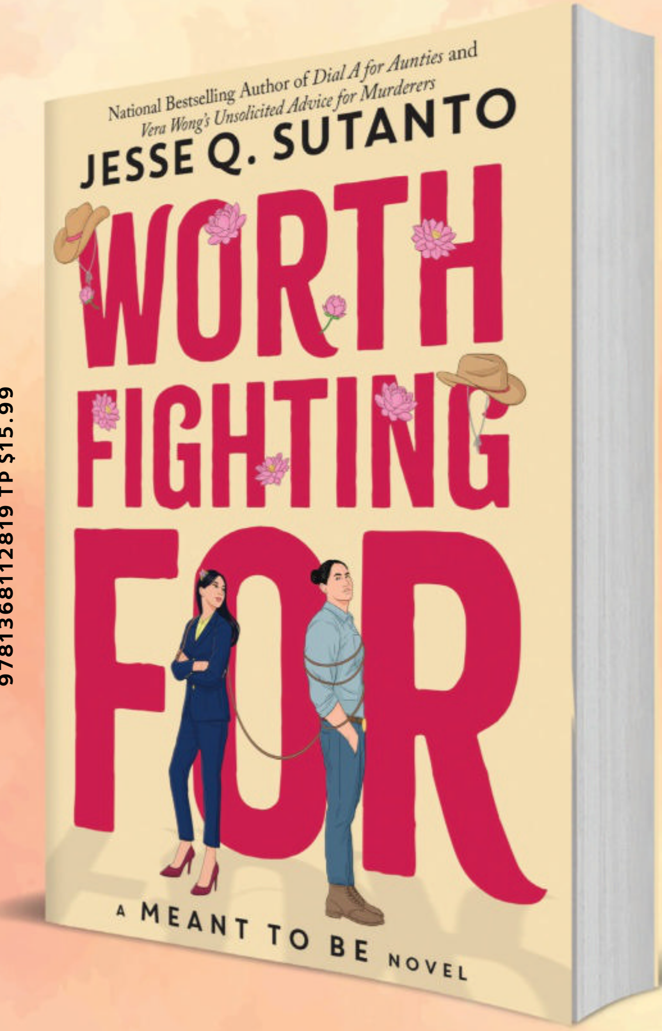
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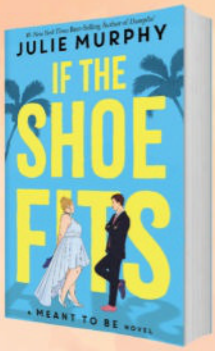
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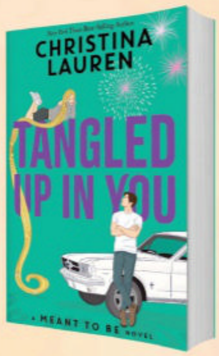
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bachelors from Kyiv to Kherson. Meanwhile, Yeva is carrying on with her work to locate a mate for her favorite endangered snail, which she lovingly calls Lefty. So it's not surprising that amid the bombs exploding around them, she ventures out in her mobile lab (towing the scheming women and kidnapped bachelors) to geolocate a fallen tree that might hold Lefty's precious snail mate, which leads to disaster. This darkly humorous story pulls off a ridiculous yet sobering plot with clever metafiction that inadvertently dissects the Russo-Ukrainian War. The powerful symbolism of Yeva and her snails will keep readers riveted. —*Andrienne Cruz*

Fast Boys and Pretty Girls.

By Lo Patrick.

July 2025. 336p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, paper, $17.99 (9781728290478); e-book (9781728290485).

Danielle Greer left her small Georgia hometown to become a model in New York City after being scouted by an agent at the Pressville Mall. But when the news of a tragic motorcycle accident in Pressville reached Dani (as her agents repackaged her), she moved back home as Danielle, heartbroken. Fifteen years later, the discovery of a skeleton on Danielle's family's property forces her to confront her complicated past and the pull of a world she thought she had left far behind. Patrick (*The Night the River Wept*, 2024) offers a haunting, atmospheric narrative that captures the contrast between family-focused, small-town Georgia and the image-obsessed Manhattan modeling industry, gradually revealing the full scope of the 15-year-old tragedy and the repercussions Danielle never expected. Readers who enjoyed the Southern noir of Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018), the domestic suspense of Megan Miranda's *The Last House Guest* (2019), or the atmospheric tension of Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017) will enjoy Patrick's exploration of regret, responsibility, and the surprisingly strong bonds of family loyalty. —*Stephanie Turza*

Fools for Love.

By Helen Schulman.

July 2025. 208p. Knopf, $28 (9780593536254); e-book (9780593536261).

In ten witty, polished, and deceptively casual stories, Schulman (*Lucky Dogs*, 2023) reflects on the messy love lives of her characters, most of whom are wealthy Jewish New Yorkers. The stories, written over several decades, most published previously and two turned into novels, feature characters who spill over from one story to another. The title story follows a young playwright who suddenly realizes, watching her husband perform in a Sam Shepard play, that they are decidedly wrong for each other; the collection's final story revisits her decades later in France with her second husband—and her father's ghost. Highlights include "The Memoirs of Lucien H.," written from the point of view of a jaded baby who has just learned how to walk, and "The Revisionist," a tale of a Westchester commuter that gives John Cheever a run for his money. Schulman's fans should be tickled by these brief and breezy variations on themes of infidelity and insufficiently requited love, while newcomers to Schulman may be tempted by the stories to explore her considerable catalog of earlier work. —*Margaret Quamme*

Greenwich.

By Kate Broad.

July 2025. 304p. St. Martin's, $28 (9781250363046); e-book (9781250363053).

Rachel is on the outs with her friends, so she decides to spend the awkward summer between high school and college at her aunt's beautiful home in upper-crust Greenwich, Connecticut, under the guise of looking out for her aunt and helping to watch her three-year-old cousin, Sabine. Rachel is a people-pleaser who hasn't figured out what makes her happy in life, and she is drawn to the surety of Sabine's nanny, Claudia, who seems to know how to handle any situation despite being only a recent college grad. Looking back at this late 1990s summer from the present, Rachel sees some troubling undertones in the way Claudia, who is Black, is treated, all while a mysterious traumatic event looms over the story, so that the reader knows that by the end of this summer, something terrible will have happened. This gothic and atmospheric debut novel is absorbingly paced with cutting depictions of dysfunctional family dynamics, exploring societal expectations, how hiding the truth corrupts and corrodes, and the truism that money does not buy happiness. —*Pamela Gardner*

> **YA:** *Teen readers comfortable with drug and alcohol abuse, child death, and sexual assault will find this reflection on late teen years experiences and varied perspectives regarding family dynamics and societal expectations revelatory. PG.*

Jamaica Road.

By Lisa Smith.

July 2025. 448p. Knopf, $29 (9780593537657); e-book (9780593537664).

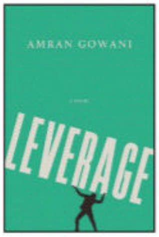
Smith's debut is a poignant and gripping coming-of-age story set against the backdrop of 1980s and '90s England. The novel follows Daphne and Connie, two teenagers navigating first love amidst racial tensions and police corruption. Daphne has spent her life trying to remain invisible, avoiding the scrutiny of racists in her school and microaggressions in her community. But Connie, confident, charismatic, and unapologetically himself, refuses to stay in the shadows. As their bond deepens, he challenges Daphne to embrace her identity and fight for her place in the world. Smith masterfully immerses the reader in the era, seamlessly weaving real-life events into the narrative. The societal issues explored are not just a backdrop but an integral force shaping the characters' lives. The novel is both deeply personal and powerfully political, tackling injustice without ever feeling didactic. *Jamaica Road* is a compelling, emotionally charged read that feels as urgent today as it would have decades ago, an unforgettable story of love, resistance, and self-discovery. —*Enobong Tommelleo*

> **YA:** *YAs interested in portrayals of first love, politics, racism, and belonging will enjoy the two protagonists as they navigate their complex teenage years and engage with these topics. ET.*

★ Leverage.

By Amran Gowani.

Aug. 2025. 320p. Atria, $28.99 (9781668076422); e-book (9781668076446).



In this blistering and riveting debut, Gowani draws on his experiences as a Wall Street analyst—as well as a clear love of Wu-Tang, video games, and comics—to dramatize the life of Ali "Al" Jafar, a wunderkind at San Francisco hedge fund Prism Capital. The son of a teenage mother, Al has fought against the odds to reach the peak of his profession. However, the novel opens with Al having lost $300 million in a disastrous bet on a for-profit college. Rather than firing him, Prism's unscrupulous and wonderfully evil founder, Paul, and his "failson" offspring, Brad, delight in giving Al an impossible task: recover the money within three months, or take the fall for an insider trading scheme. While constantly considering suicide as a way out, Al finds an even darker side to finance to get the money, but he will need to do things that show how truly grotesque and rigged his profession is. Funny and full of narrative shocks reminiscent of works by Percival Everett and Sergio de la Pava, Gowani's debut is gloriously outlandish and compulsively readable, and, like Teddy Wayne's *Kapitoil* (2010), it shines a bright light on the bizarrely legal and morally heinous practices of finance capitalism. —*Alexander Moran*

Lonely Crowds.

By Stephanie Wambugu.

July 2025. 304p. Little, Brown, $28 (9780316581332).

Wambugu's mesmerizing debut novel is like a slow-burning fire, drawing readers into its world with quiet intensity. At its core, it is a meditation on friendship, obsession, and the search for self-definition. Ruth, the only child of immigrant parents in New England, finds herself entangled in the enigmatic orbit of Maria, a fellow scholarship student burdened by personal tragedy. Although Maria relies on Ruth and Ruth's parents' care and support during their childhoods, she is the one who leads the course of their lives—through school, college, and New York's pulsating 1990s art scene—as Ruth struggles to distinguish her own identity from within

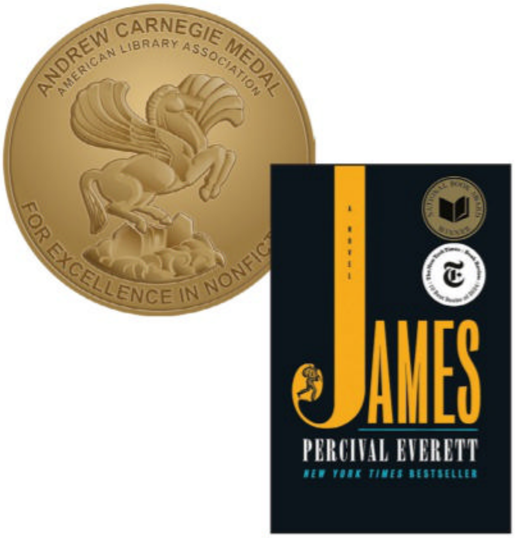
Continued on p.28

The *Booklist* Carnegie Medal Interview

Percival Everett

By Allison Escoto

Allison Escoto, head librarian and director of reading programs at the Center for Fiction in Brooklyn, and the chair of the 2025 Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence Selection Committee, had some questions for this year's winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, Percival Everett. Here's their conversation.

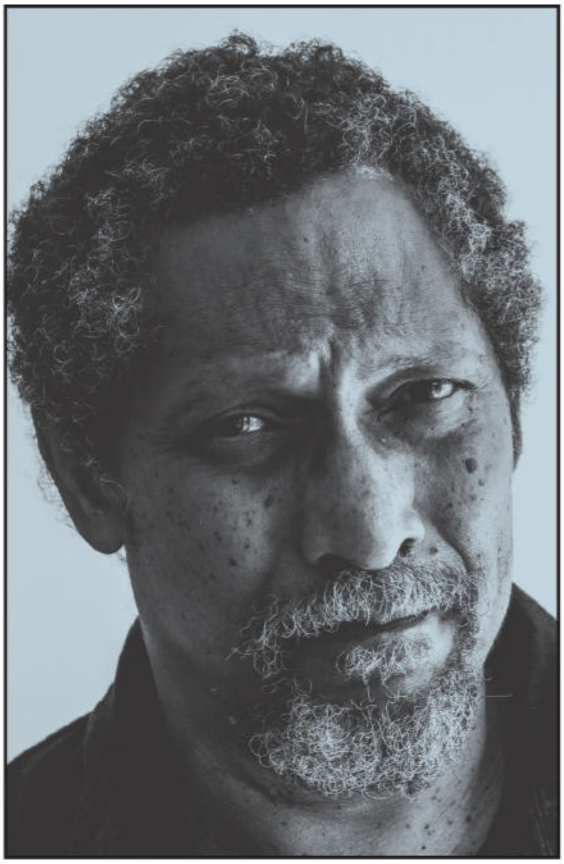

ANDREW CARNEGIE MEDAL
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
FOR EXCELLENCE IN NONFICT
A NOVEL
JAMES
PERCIVAL EVERETT
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Escoto: *You've described* **James** *as being "in conversation" with the classic that inspired it. What made you want to have this conversation now?*
Everett: To tell the truth, I don't know. Had I thought of this novel sooner, I would have written it sooner. However, it might be a completely different work, for better or worse. I think the covert attack on historical accuracy and the current anti-intellectual atmosphere of the country must have played into my coming to it.

Escoto: *Part of the beauty of this novel is that it combines satire with historical fiction and character study. Do you find any one particular genre more difficult to write or more enjoyable to write? What are some of your favorite satirical novels?*
Everett: I'm not certain what I do is satire. I don't see myself on the right side of any issue, but it's in my nature to challenge all positions. I hate easy answers. I love Swift and Sterne. I do love much of Twain's work. Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* is wonderful. I grew up with the novels of Kurt Vonnegut. Any work that makes us look at ourselves can be called satirical. I never imagine that I'm writing comedy, but I'm told it happens.

Escoto: **James** *adds such a compelling and important perspective to the American canon and is already considered a classic. What do you hope readers learn from James' story?*
Everett: I'm excited about the book because people are reading it. I would be nearly as excited if any literary novel were getting this kind of attention. I believe in the power of art. I want to live in a culture where people consume art and think about it. Readers make the meaning.

Escoto: *It was such an honor to award the Carnegie Medal for Excellence to this remarkable novel. This is especially true during a time when there are efforts to diminish and ban stories like* **James**. *What are some ways that librarians have supported you in the past, and how can we further support your work?*
Everett: When I was too young to even be in the library at the University of South Carolina, I was allowed in by a librarian who liked my interest in books. I roamed the stacks of that building. My high-school librarians, Ms. Layson and Ms. Stone, took me seriously, and that meant the world to me. I lament that so many students don't get to prowl the stacks now, see the books parked on either side of the one you're hunting for, but librarians remain.



Michael Avedon

Self-Published Books Showcase

These books are recommended by *BlueInk Review,* a fee-based review service. Every month, *BlueInk* will compile a list of their favorite self-published titles for *Booklist,* as a service to librarians hoping to incorporate self-published work into their collections. *BlueInk* was founded by Patti Thorn, former book review editor of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*, and Patricia Moosbrugger, a literary agent who represents several best-selling authors. The company delivers professional, unbiased reviews of self-published books written by critics drawn largely from major mainstream publications and by editors from prominent publishing houses. Stars reflect the decisions of *BlueInk* reviewers and editors. *Booklist* is happy to bring this curated collection of the best in self-publishing for adults and youth to our audience.

Adult

Beyond Potential: A Guide for Creatives Who Want to Re-Assess, Re-Define, and Re-Ignite Their Careers.

By Kate Kayaian.

2025. 214p. Moongate, paper, $18 (9798991878203). 650.14.

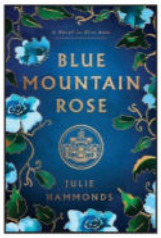
Kayaian provides a blueprint for creatives seeking an optimal lifestyle according to their own definitions. Kayaian is a professional cellist, writer, coach, and more. Creatives, she notes, range from musicians and dancers to writers, painters, and others relying upon imagination and innovation in their life's work. She logically helps readers understand where they currently are in their careers and what messaging brought them there, asking questions like: "What kinds of things were considered possible in your household?" and "If today were truly the end [of your life], what would you regret not having done?" She then guides readers to define their true goals and reignite their passions—and delivers a thoughtful plan to get them to their unique points. Kayaian writes clearly and crisply, offering a broad range of engaging examples. Not all exercises will resonate with everyone, but for readers who are serious about revitalizing a creative career, many of them are sure to help. Kayaian's process requires in-depth soul searching, and committed creative readers will emerge from the book refreshed and enthusiastic.

★ Blue Mountain Rose: A Novel in Five Acts.

By Julie Hammonds.

2025. 336p. Soulstice, $24.95 (9781734989984).

In this clever novel, characters staging a *Hamlet* production find that their lives coincidentally mirror many of the play's themes: action versus inaction, ghosts of the past, dealing with grief, and more. The story centers on the Blue Mountain Rose, an outdoor Elizabethan stage in Flagstaff, Arizona. It's 2009, the economy is tanking, and the Rose needs extensive renovations. Revered director Richard Keane is considering stepping down after almost 40 years. His heir apparent is Kate Morales, a single mother coping with her job, love life, and a precocious 11-year-old. When Peter Dunmore auditions for *Hamlet,* the unknown actor wows Richard and Kate. They begin to pin their hopes on audiences turning out to see his extraordinary, star-making turn. What they don't know is that Dunmore is already a star, hiding secrets that may destroy their dreams of keeping the Rose alive. Even readers not well versed in *Hamlet* will find enough background information about the play to stay in the loop, and Hammonds displays superior knowledge of launching a demanding theatrical production. With Shakespeare's continued resonance, this should become a book club favorite with plentiful fodder for discussion.



★ Enchanted Tales and Twisted Lore: Fairy Tales, Folklore and Fables Reimagined–Volume 1.

Ed. by Marx Pyle and J. C. Mastro.

2025. 428p. Cabbit Crossing, paper, $20.99 (9798227718044).

This anthology is composed of 16 short stories by a wide range of talented authors. The stories predominantly focus on the reinterpretation, celebration, and sometimes subversion of a culturally diverse range of traditional folklore and fables. Blending fantasy, sf, and crime in an entirely contemporary manner, the narratives recalibrate these well-worn yarns, presenting familiar characters and fairy-tale archetypes in a series of unfamiliar time periods and settings. Standout stories include "Fairly Dead," by Sophia DeSensi, in which a corpse bride-to-be in an enchanted kingdom resorts to increasingly extreme measures to ensure her future marriage to a charming prince, and "The Girl Who Grew Up," by Michael Joseph Tharnish Roby, where Peter Pan is portrayed as an abusive, manipulative man-child bent on revenge against former mother-surrogate Wendy. There are no weak links in the anthology, which is an accessible, excellently curated, and impeccably well-crafted selection of stories packed with creative brio, incidence and on occasion, laugh-out-loud humor. It's sure to satisfy genre fans seeking fresh, exciting takes on traditional storytelling standards.

Pearly Gates.

By Bonnie Solomon.

2025. 349p. Bonsol, $32.99 (9798992613322).

Solomon's lively LGBTQ+ fantasy blends humor, heart, and the supernatural. Pearly Gates is a once-glamorous drag queen who, after death, finds herself working as a cosmic sanitation worker when her soul mate, Thunder, leaves her to be reincarnated. Longing to reconnect with him and prove she can evolve, Pearly secretly takes on a role as a spirit guide. Her assignment lands her in a cozy Midwestern bookstore café, owned by Thunder's reincarnation. Pearly's vibrant personality provides much of the story's energy, but the characters she guides offer compelling emotional arcs of their own. These include a young widow struggling to move forward, a terminally ill student rediscovering joy, and a trans woman learning to value herself. Each subplot offers moments of sincerity alongside the fantastical elements. At times, the humor leans too heavily into predictability. Still, the narrative remains grounded by Pearly's emotional journey and raises important questions about change, forgiveness, and what it means to love someone across lifetimes. Ultimately, this is a heartfelt story about love, legacy, and the glitter we leave behind.

Radical Next: Reclaiming Your Humanity in a Post-Human World.

By Sam Rad.

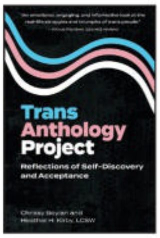
2025. 496p. Amplify, $32 (9798891382480). 303.48.

The future may be now, but it's not static. In fact, Rad posits, transformation is accelerating at an intense pace, and it's time to protect our humanity while embracing technological and societal advances. Rad organizes her presentation into naturally progressing sections, moving from the inner self outward to personal communications, societal structures, and finally, the grandness of the cosmos. Along the way, she compares human existence to an "operating system" and proposes how to cope with the rapid acceleration of "upgrades" to that operating system. For example, Rad notes that we've seen rapid growth in technologies aiding treatment of diseases thanks to DNA research, but she cautions against striving for an artificial "fountain of youth," which "sounds like some ill-conceived Faustian bargain . . . do we really want to live in a world where we have removed ourselves from the natural cycles of our context, our ecosystem?" Rad addresses AI, Bitcoin, personalized learning, religion, spirituality, and more. Her wide-ranging material is highly esoteric, but her writing style is conversational and easily accessible, and her forward-looking content will spark many lively conversations.

Trans Anthology Project: Reflections of Self-Discovery and Acceptance.

By Chrissy Boylan and Heather H. Kirby.

2024. 310p. Kirby Creative Clinical Solutions, paper, $14.95 (9798218489502). 155.9.

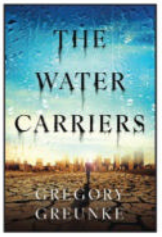

Trans Anthology Project
Reflections of Self-Discovery and Acceptance
Chrissy Boylan and Heather H. Kirby, LCSW

This deeply moving, thoughtfully curated collection illuminates the lived experiences of transgender individuals and their families. Designed to foster empathy, understanding, and support, it blends educational content with firsthand narratives on gender identity, dysphoria, and transition, while perspectives from experts, survey responses, and practical resources provide a well-rounded look at the triumphs and challenges of gender-diverse life. Among the standout personal narratives is "Choosing Myself," which offers a raw, introspective look at self-discovery and transition: "Once when I was sixteen," writes the author of that piece, "I threw my arms out in frustration as I argued with my mom. She gave me this sideways glance, her face painted with disgust, and said 'Stop gesturing like a man' . . . . Gesture like a man, how the hell else am I supposed to gesture?" The anthology's strength lies in its authenticity and range of voices. With its heartfelt personal essays, this compassionate and affirming collection is essential reading for anyone seeking to better understand the transgender experience.

The Water Carriers.

By Gregory Greunke.

2025. 443p. Greunke Haus, paper, $10.99 (9798991868228).



Vivid world building and distinctly unique concepts propel Greunke's cautionary sf tale about the consequences of unrestricted fossil fuel use and unchecked greed. In this whirlwind, globe-hopping adventure set in the near-future, AugWatches display augmented reality, personalized AI functions as a companion, the dead landscape is devoid of trees, and daily temperatures reach 130 degrees Fahrenheit. Greunke introduces Kasemchai Seng, age 10, when his Cambodian family nearly drowns in the early days of the Rain Wall, a years-long torrential downpour centered on the west coast of Africa and Cambodia that obliterates nations and populations. Years later, though, Kasemchai's father, Preap Seng, and Philippe Labonne of the Ivory Coast are vastly wealthy from shipping water worldwide via fleets of tankers, and their children hope to someday take over. Greunke is a splendid writer whose cultural depictions of a parched Earth, right down to the greeting "Are you thirsty?" (in place of "How are you?"), are quietly brilliant. Adroitly crafted, this is a dizzying, dazzling depiction of a thirsty Earth and a kick-in-the-pants reminder of what's at stake if we don't act now.

Why Did God Make the Tree?

By Tammy Gregg.

2025. 305p. Cemetery Hill , $28.99 (9798992327106).

WHY DID GOD MAKE THE TREE?
A PATRICK DENNY NOVEL
TAMMY GREGG

Gregg's modern-day gothic ghost story, elevated by wit, rich characters, and proliferating mysteries, centers on Samantha. Traumatized from criminal accusations of killing her parents, she's now under the care of Patrick Denny, a best-selling novelist who has returned to psychiatry. Patrick weans Samantha and other patients off the drug regimens he believes have reduced them to vegetables, to the consternation of his nemesis, Dr. Dilby. Patrick assigns Samantha to read the Victorian-era diary of the architect who designed the bleak New Hampshire institution they occupy, situated alongside a cemetery and forest. That diary, various dreams, Patrick's backstory, sniping hospital doctors, wealthy town patrons with disturbing secrets, mushroom motifs, and Michael's delusions (or are they?) interweave and morph in and out of insanity, dreams, and reality. A master storyteller, Gregg implants exposition into the midst of powerful emotion, while deftly holding mirrors up to real-life horrors, notably a Grimm-like rendition of the violence of childbirth and the vulnerability of the woman laboring. With layered characters, comic relief, and an epilogue that ties up loose ends, this is a twisted, dark, and deeply immersive tale.

Youth

Chemistories.

By Maya Mourshed. Illus. by the author.

2024. 132p. Society of Young Inklings, paper, $16.99 (9781956380460).

In this playful, illustrated book about chemistry and the periodic table, Mourshed combines science with everyday social situations middle schoolers face. Told through inventive stories featuring chemical elements as relatable characters—along with poems and factual background—it's a clever debut, never mind that Mourshed herself is a seventh grader. Mourshed discovered a love of creative writing at age eight, the same year that, she writes, "I stumbled across a periodic table in a library book." She learned the uses of each element in real life and the relationships between groups of elements and began imagining them as characters: "What would their personalities be? What would they do every day?" Mourshed's human and elemental characters are endearing as they impart key chemistry lessons. For example, in one story, she explains how lonely Helium was unable to befriend other atom children because, instead of bonding, they "bounced off of Helium's outer shell." Yet Helium becomes popular, thanks to his ability to emit a bright pink light. This charming, impressive book will delight STEM students 8-12 years old, but even chemistry-phobic adults will learn a thing or two.

The Day the Clouds Went Away.

By Richard Rieman. Illus. by Barbara Owczarek.

2024. 40p. Illustrated Audio Books, $18.95 (9781639390038).

In this picture book, Claudia, ruler of Princessdom, is excited about her imminent eighth birthday party, but she's concerned about rain spoiling the festivities. She asks her wizard, Fumbledore, to cast a spell to make the clouds disappear. Instead, different clouds appear, each advising her of the benefits they bring, like delivering rain or blocking the harsh sun. Claudia dismisses each cloud in turn, until finally, the stream begins to dry up, and a forest fire erupts. Claudia desperately agrees to let Fumbledore bring the clouds back, and rain from the clouds puts out the fire. With an enhanced appreciation for the clouds' importance, Claudia earns a new name: Princess Cloudia. The book explains cloud types in a fun, understandable way, presenting them in the shapes of animals. Most of the narrative is written simply and conversationally for easy, natural reading. The name Fumbledore is an unfortunate distraction, due to its similarity to a certain famous franchise's wizard. Nonetheless, this is an enjoyable magical fantasy that teaches children about science and the natural world.

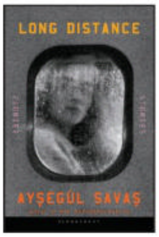
Continued from p.24

Maria's magnetic pull. Wambugu's prose is sharp and meticulous, effortlessly capturing the nuances of artistic ambition and the emotional weight of creativity. The novel explores how art both shapes and distorts relationships, asking whether self-expression can ever be truly separate from the people who inspire and enact it. Compelling and evocative, the impact of *Lonely Crowds* lingers long after the final page is turned. —*Enobong Tommelleo*

Long Distance.

By Ayşegül Savaş.

July 2025. 192p. Bloomsbury, $26.99 (9781639733101); e-book (9781639733118).



Savaş follows her brilliant novel, *The Anthropologists* (2024), with a short-story collection shaped by her anthropological understanding that volumes are reflected in our mundane, everyday actions. She portrays millennials on the cusp of the next phase in their lives, whether that's buying a home or exploring new relationships. Populating these tales are richly textured characters struggling to make room for new goalposts while accommodating the old. Regret over youthful mistakes sometimes colors the pictures as well. In "We Are Here," a student studying abroad in Russia misses the true connection she could have accessed during her stay, the one with her aging host. Tinged with aching insecurity, Savaş' characters sometimes question their life choices; their paths are foggy and shaky. The young woman in "Twirl" shuffles through a series of men on dating apps while puzzling over a friendship with an older Turkish expat. She worries that her life is merely "a facade of beautiful objects and luxurious rituals, without any sturdy foundation." The characters may be vulnerable, but they are never overwrought, a balancing act Savaş executes flawlessly. As she makes clear, navigating adulthood with an added sense of rootlessness is not easy, especially in today's world. —*Poornima Apte*

The Love Fix.

By Jill Shalvis.

June 2025. 320p. Avon, paper, $18.99 (9780063353442).

Lexi Clark had a tough relationship with her gambler mother, Daisy, who cleaned up her act when she married Ashley's father. The stepsisters love each other, but they're not close, at least not until after Daisy's death, when Lexi is called back to Sunrise Cove, California, to complete a mission with Ashley: deliver six envelopes to people Daisy needed closure with before collecting their inheritance, the bulk of Daisy's lottery winnings. Neighbor Heath Bowman had a tough childhood too, and after Lexi moved away with her father, Daisy became a surrogate mother to him, which is why he's helping Lexi and Ashley with their quest. That, and he's had a thing for Lexi since they were kids. The attraction is mutual, but as two adults with deep-seated scars, what hope is there for a future together? Heath is a classic Shalvis hero, hardworking, easygoing, and steady, the perfect foil for chaotic Lexi. As much a story about sisters as it is about romance, *The Love Fix* is funny and emotionally resonant. A real treat. —*Susan Maguire*

Love Forms.

By Claire Adam.

July 2025. 288p. Hogarth, $28 (9780593230923); e-book (9780593595046).

In the cinematic opening to Adam's (*Golden Child*, 2019) second novel, 16-year-old Dawn is being whisked away from her home in Trinidad to a nunnery in Venezuela in order to secretly complete an unwanted pregnancy and give the child up for adoption. It's the 1980s, and Dawn is a member of the proud, respectable, hardworking Bishop family, so this seems her only option. Decades later, Dawn is 58 and has been searching for the child she left behind a lifetime ago. Inquiry after inquiry has ended in disappointment and despair, and Dawn's obsession has fractured relations with her husband and sons. Along with Dawn's journey, Adam paints an illuminating portrait of Trinidadian culture and the social/political climate at the time, as well as that of neighboring Venezuela. Adam shines in her characterization of the Bishop family, their fascinating dynamics, brutal honesty, and most of all, their enduring love for one another. The core of this poignant novel is the powerful mother-child bond and its ability to endure even long after losing a child. —*Lillian Dabney*

Lucky Break.

By Jaclyn Westlake.

July 2025. 352p. Avon, paper, $18.99 (9780063340763).

Eliza Colletti could use a fresh start. Moving from San Francisco to the Midwest might seem outrageous to her family and friends, but it all makes perfect sense to Eliza. Especially given that Juneberry Lake in Minnesota will give any professional moving to their small town $10,000 towards the purchase of a home there. The first thing Eliza plans on doing upon arriving in her new hometown is getting to know everyone. However, aside from the town's coffee shop owner and fellow new transplant Joel, everyone else seems to be politely keeping their distance. While trying to discover why her neighbors aren't being more neighborly, Eliza discovers another mystery, the solution to which could be the key to Eliza's future in Juneberry Lake. Westlake's (*Dear Dotty*, 2024) latest fabulously fun, feel-good novel offers something for every reader, including a dollop of romance, a dash of mystery, a charming small-town setting, a cast of endearing characters, and a loving paean to the power of four-legged friends in our lives. —*John Charles*

Maggie; or, a Man and a Woman Walk into a Bar.

By Katie Yee.

July 2025. 208p. Summit, $26.99 (9781668084212).

At an all-you-can-eat buffet, a woman's marriage comes to an end. It's almost comical. Her husband confesses to an affair in the land of endless samosas, but our beloved unnamed protagonist knows how to twist tragedy into dry humor. "A man and a woman walk into a bar," she says. "It sounds like the start of a very old joke, and it is. It is also the start of an affair." Soon after their dinner disaster, she uncovers another ugly truth. She has a tumor, and it's cancer. She names the tumor Maggie, after her husband's girlfriend. So begins a turbulent saga that's sewn together by grief and heartache, lined with dark threads of comedy. Our protagonist, a Chinese American woman, also starts to pass Chinese tales on to her two children and reflects on motherhood. Despite its heaviness, author Yee's novel knows to embrace the hopeful and heartwarming, such as the protagonist's relationship with her best friend. A beautifully crafted debut that isn't afraid to guffaw in times of darkness. —*Allison Cho*

Make Your Way Home.

By Carrie R. Moore.

July 2025. 336p. Tin House, paper, $17.99 (9781963108286); e-book (9781963108354).

In her expansive debut collection, Moore draws upon ancestral traditions to illuminate how the past continually shapes the present. These 11 short stories traverse the Southern landscape, from Florida's marshes to the Carolina mountains, exploring the deep-rooted ties their characters feel to home, even as many of them yearn to leave. As they search for love, characters uncover unexpected truths about identity, belonging, and choice. In one story, a young man discovers a hidden side of a family curse, one silenced during a time when choosing who to love was an act of rebellion. In another, a boy learns the quiet strength of community and its ability to uplift. And in another, a young woman boldly redefines family on her own terms. Moore masterfully captures the intergenerational experiences of Black men, women, and families, weaving tales of resistance, connection, and self-discovery. With compassion and depth, she explores the tension between longing for home and finding freedom elsewhere. A stunning debut by a writer whose voice is both vital and unforgettable. —*Enobong Tommelleo*

Meet Me at the Crossroads.

By Megan Giddings.

June 2025. 320p. Amistad, $28.99 (9780063337978); e-book (9780063337992).

In this mesmerizing novel, bizarre blue doors begin inexplicably appearing across the world. When people realize that the doors are indestructible and impenetrable, there are mixed reactions. Are they portals to the afterlife? Are aliens responsible? Some begin forming religions around the doors, which mysteriously open of their own accord, sometimes with deadly consequences. The narrative centers around identical twins Ayanna and Olivia. After their parents' bitter divorce, Ayanna lives with their father, Antony, a devoted member of the Church of the Blue Door, while Olivia resides with their devout Christian mother, Opal. While Ayanna is more outspoken, Olivia's main goal is pleasing Opal, who wants to keep Olivia's Christian ideals intact. But Olivia begins dreaming about the doors, her curiosity growing deeper by the day and reaching a boiling point at Ayanna's confirmation ceremony. Fans of Haruki Murakami and Victor LaVelle will enjoy Giddings' (*The Women Could Fly*, 2022) refreshingly poetic prose. Blending elements of magical realism and speculative fiction, this novel explores questions of faith, humanity, and the untold secrets of the universe. —*Katie Pomeroy*

Mendell Station.

By J. B. Hwang.

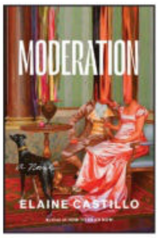
July 2025. 208p. Bloomsbury, $26.99 (9781639736188); e-book (9781639736195).

Friends since childhood, Esther and Miriam were each other's anchors while growing up in dysfunctional families. When Esther dies suddenly, Miriam is unmoored by the loss of her friend and her subsequent wavering faith in God. Uncertain that she can continue teaching Scripture at a Christian school during this crisis of faith, Miriam quits her job and becomes a postal carrier in the incipient days of the pandemic. She takes solace in the solitary routine and physical labor of delivering the mail and attempts to process her grief by composing letters to Esther. This quiet, contemplative novel about faith and loss does not offer any tidy resolutions to Miriam's emotional state; rather, it shows how grief can be a constant pulse in the background even as she begins to accept her new reality and see glimmers of connection to the people in her life. Hwang, who delivered mail during the pandemic, offers a true-to-life look at the haze of grief, the uncertainty and confusion of early 2020, and the inner workings of the postal service. —*Halle Carlson*

Moderation.

By Elaine Castillo.

Aug. 2025. 320p. Viking, $29 (9780593489666); e-book (9780593489673).



Castillo's sharp, compelling second novel requires warning and encouragement: get through the first chapter's unspeakably graphic violence to be rewarded with a slyly brilliant narrative about a Filipino American thirtysomething learning (eventually) to live real life. Pseudonymous Girlie Delmundo, originally from Milpitas, California, but relocated to Vegas, is a content moderator—or Subject Matter Specialist: Head of Child Sexual Abuse, "*someone who makes our social media family a safe and fun place for everybody.*" After an unprecedented 10-plus years in a job that averages several suicide attempts a year, Girlie is understandably, utterly tired. Of *everything*. Having proven herself to be a—*the*?—top performer, she's recruited to moderate pioneering content for the company's newly acquired virtual reality, "Playground." Working in a custom-created catsuit comes with ample rewards—more than enough to ease her family's post-2008 financial challenges (and filial expectations). Interactions with her new boss might also be an unexpected benefit. VR for medical and mental health is, well, real, as inhumane evil remains timeless. While cleverly interrogating interactions, communication, and relationships, Castillo again proves to be an enviably erudite chronicler of (racist) history, power structures, identity politics, and socioeconomic inequities. Woven throughout are her poignant takes on Zillow-ed home pics, beloved senior dogs, and maybe even a *Notting Hill* (Gipsy Hill here, racial slur noted) encounter. —*Terry Hong*

My Other Heart.

By Emma Nanami Strenner.

July 2025. 416p. Pamela Dorman, $30 (9780593831014); e-book (9780593831021).

Sabrina Chen and Kit Herzog are best friends about to embark on different paths as they prepare for college, one wanting to travel to China, the other to Japan. Their final summer together forms the emotional core of this sweeping debut that also ties back to the years-ago story of Mimi Truang, a young Vietnamese woman whose infant daughter disappears in a Philadelphia airport. Strenner brings extraordinary depth to the inner lives of her characters, weaving themes of identity, belonging, and family into a richly layered narrative that spans decades and continents. With subtle shifts in perspective and a gift for poignant detail, Strenner explores the ache of adoption, the quiet persistence of undocumented immigrants, and the bonds between mothers and children. The emotional range is wide, from the uncertainties of first love to the heartbreak of long-held secrets. Readers will be captivated by Strenner's elegant prose and the tender resilience of her characters, making this an unforgettable coming-of-age story. —*Brittney Cray*

YA: *Teen readers who like poignant emotionality and tenderly resilient characters will appreciate this coming-of-age tale featuring recent high-school grads. BC.*

The Namaste Club.

By Asha Elias.

July 2025. 336p. Morrow, $30 (9780063425217); e-book (9780063425224).

Elias' follow-up to *Pink Glass Houses* (2024) is set in a yoga retreat that is anything but peaceful and calming. Right away, readers know that a young man has been killed at the Namaste Club, but how did it happen? The narrative flashes back and starts the story there, meeting Shakti, a young instructor. She has rented the space and opens invitations to her students. Jessica and Indira are two middle-aged moms who bonded over their respective divorces, Carol Anne is a conservative real-estate agent wanting to escape her life, and Barbara is one of Shakti's devotees, as is Daniel, the murder victim. The motley crew settles in, each presenting their own perspective, with caretaker Martina chiming in as well. But conflict rises fast, and soon each person is surrounded by danger—and not only from their peers. The alligators, boars, and pythons roaming about add an extra dash of fear to the story. Elias excels here as she did in her previous book, expertly crafting each character's voice to create this suspenseful tale. —*Cari Dubiel*

Necessary Fiction.

By Eloghosa Osunde.

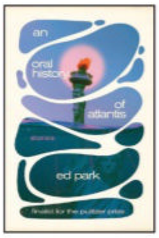
July 2025. 320p. Riverhead, $28 (9780593851203); e-book (9780593851210).

Gays, bisexuals, lesbians, and polyamorous couples in predominantly conservative Nigeria ponder their messy relationships and conflicting desires. These sympathetic characters, who found one another in a group called Truth Circle, air out their difficulties regarding their parents (some of whom are queer themselves) and discuss how they can carve an unencumbered lifestyle. Ziz, the premier narrator, is a confident and successful jack-of-all-trades who wants to live the way he wants despite the disapproval of his father. Maro, Ziz's best friend, mourns the loss of his dad, Tega, and juggles two male lovers. Akin, a talented musician, doesn't feel excited about sexual relations. Awele and Yesimi are high-school classmates who share a scandalous past centered on their lesbian affair. Black is an escort for the sexually undecided. Readers might be overwhelmed with over two-dozen characters, but the atmosphere and culture of lesser-known circles in Nigerian society will capture the imagination. These candid and descriptive stories tackle divisive situations shown through the day-to-day happenings, steamy escapades, passionate musings, and bittersweet predicaments of spirited individuals. —*Andrienne Cruz*

An Oral History of Atlantis.

By Ed Park.

July 2025. 224p. Random, $28 (9780812998993); e-book (9780812988338).



Park infuses his debut story collection with the same extraordinary inventiveness that made his novel *Same Bed Different Dreams* (2023) a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Some stories are cleverly (almost) linear. A "Dear Alumni Notes" letter credits an enigmatic professor for the ubiquitous phrase "It is—what it is" in "The Gift." Two spies meet in Seoul, although one fails the coded-menu test in

"Watch Your Step." A first-time novelist goes on a book tour in "Thought and Memory." A dire situation reveals the provenance of a lifetime of passwords in "Slide to Unlock," and literature becomes forever corrupted in "Eat Pray Click." A few characters appear in multiple stories in various incarnations. Hans de Krap, for example, berates an overzealous translator in the deliciously comical opener, "A Note to My Translator;" makes a cameo appearance in "Machine City," about a (meta) Korean American Yale undergrad named Ed acting in his first (and only) film; and narrates the titular final story as a Manhattan teen transplant "do[ing] mundane midget things." In "Weird Menace," a director and actor provide commentary for a collector's edition of their cult film, *Weird Menace*, while Park can't contain recurring Tina and (palindromic) Hannah in a single story. Throughout his 16 stories, Park deftly upends quotidian expectations, encourages discomfort, and presents surreality with biting humor. —*Terry Hong*

The Other Wife.

By Jackie Thomas-Kennedy.

July 2025. 304p. Riverhead, $29 (9780593851609); e-book (9780593851616).

Zuzu feels cloistered in the tony Hudson Valley home she always dreamed of owning. Her attorney wife, Agnes, works long hours, leaving Zuzu to care for their young son and every other aspect of their lives. To escape the angst and doldrums, Zuzu texts with her college bestie/crush (and occasional lover), Cash, also a married parent now. Meanwhile, Agnes suggests a visit to her ex (who, Zuzu is sure, is still in love with her), who just got bad news. Threaded into this present-day story are dated, nonchronological flashbacks to Zuzu's younger years: her parents' divorce, teen years, college, law school, and meeting Agnes. Zuzu's overall ambivalence in life, never quite sure of what—and who—she wants, is her essence as a narrator too, and she has a fearless familiarity with her own flaws, namely her deep need to be desired. Rich in Zuzu's lifelike conversations and interiority, Thomas-Kennedy's debut is a humbly expansive marriage story and a tale of growing older in lockstep with a version of yourself that gets to stay young. —*Annie Bostrom*

The Payback.

By Kashana Cauley.

July 2025. 256p. Atria, $27.99 (9781668075531); e-book (9781668075555).

Jada has a fashion degree, but she's been blackballed by the industry. Audrey majored in a profitable field, but one security slip ended her coding career. Lanae is a punk rocker who attended a fancy liberal arts school. Over a decade out of college and with unpayable student debts, it's not just their credit scores that suffer. Turquoise-swathed debt police stalk, harass, and beat them so boldly that other shoppers walk right past the violence outside fancy grocery stores. "We [Black women] were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and the pay scale, and so whatever happened to our faces could be one more thing nobody really cared about." With nothing left to lose, the three hatch a risky plan that could free them forever. Cauley follows *The Survivalists* (2023) with another wry, racially informed, and near-dystopian novel, this one featuring characters clinging to "acceptable" lives and prose that simmers à la *Twilight Zone* throughout. With the mix of high-stakes caper, humor, and capitalist commentary, this is a winner, especially for millennials eager to burn their loan documents. —*Heather Booth*

The Rabbit Club.

By Christopher J. Yates.

July 2025. 320p. Hanover Square, $30 (9781335550972).

When Alistair "Ali" McCain left California to study literature at Oxford in the fall of 1994, he had two primary objectives. First, to connect with his biological father, "Gel" McCain, a British rockstar known for his debauchery. Second, to gain admission into the Saracens, a shadowy club with a history of producing future Prime Ministers. Yates' winking yarn is both homage and parody of the dark academia genre, including a nod to Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1992). The cast of characters includes Alistair's prim roommate, William, siblings Izzy and Guy, and fellow lit students Emma and Victor, who hail from more humble backgrounds. Literary references abound, ranging from Shakespeare to Dickens to Nirvana and most notably the overarching motifs of *Alice in Wonderland*. Secret societies, mysterious documents, and cryptic backstories all add to the richly detailed university setting. As Ali hopes to establish a relationship with his father, he must navigate an increasingly intricate plot of scheming characters with shifting identities and questionable motivations. Yates (*Grist Mill Road*, 2018) is clearly having fun, and readers will too. —*Bill Kelly*

> **YA:** *Themes of complicated familial dynamics, adjusting to college life and fitting in, and light parody of dark academia will appeal to teens. BK.*

Reports of His Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated.

By James Goodhand.

July 2025. 320p. MIRA, paper, $18.99 (9780778387466).

Ray Thorns lives a quiet life. He hasn't spoken to his family in years, and he amuses himself by running the same errands for decades on end. But when a neighbor drops dead in Ray's house, a case of mistaken identity ensues. Ray is thought to be deceased, and he must figure out how to set the record straight—and decide if his life is even worth returning to. Goodhand (*The Day Tripper*, 2024) wrings both tragedy and comedy out of this scenario to great effect. Ray is an 80-year-old man with a lifetime of faded dreams to contend with. His loneliness is a core facet of the novel. His regrets and his sense of insignificance infuse everything, yet there is a quiet dignity in his refusal to become bitter. Goodhand's prose is charming and warm without veering too far into sentimentality, and this is, ultimately, a deeply optimistic story. The novel's exploration of love and mortality will leave readers with much to discuss. —*Zeja Z. Copes*

Room on the Sea: Three Novellas.

By André Aciman.

June 2025. 272p. Farrar, $27 (9780374613419); e-book (9780374613426).

Soulmate connections unite these three short novels (or long stories, ranging from 60 to 100 pages) from the author of emotionally riveting literary memoirs (most recently *Roman Year*, 2024) and novels, including *Call Me By Your Name* (2007). In *The Gentleman from Peru,* a prickly woman from a group of more agreeable young American tourists is singled out at their coastal Italian hotel by an elder regular, who shows her places she inexplicably already knows. The title piece, the book's most plainly romantic, begins in the most unromantic of places: a Manhattan jury selection room. Two sixtysomething strangers share coffee and M&M's over the course of a week, marveling at their instant closeness and the possibility, despite the significant lives they've already built, of building something new. *Mariana* is a strongly voiced tale channeling a woman who is somehow both modern and from another time as she takes readers spiraling with her through a recent love affair. (Aciman shares his inspiration in a postscript.) Spinning a kind of daydream, these addictive stories alight on the wish and wonder of romantic love. —*Annie Bostrom*

The Satisfaction Café.

By Kathy Wang.

July 2025. 352p. Scribner, $28.99 (9781668068922); e-book (9781668068946).

Joan Liang's life hasn't gone the way she planned. A young Taiwanese immigrant navigating 1970s California, she dreams of opportunity but finds herself cleaning houses, studying by night, and marrying a man she barely knows. After her first marriage ends disastrously, she falls into a second life, marrying an older, wealthy American, raising his children, yet still feeling restless and discontent. It's only later, when she opens the Satisfaction Café, a small place built around listening and connection, that she finally starts to find meaning. Through small acts of courage and self-discovery, she slowly builds a life defined not by others' ambitions but by her own quiet resilience. Wang's (*Imposter Syndrome*, 2021) writing is sharp, comical, and quietly heartbreaking. Perfect for readers who love an emotional slow burn, *The Satisfaction Café* is a poignant, darkly funny story about how we survive—and even sometimes thrive—after life doesn't go as planned. At its heart, it is a moving portrait of how starting over can be its own kind of victory. —*Emily Park*

Summer on Lilac Island.

By Lindsay MacMillan.

July 2025. 400p. Harper Muse, paper, $18.99 (9781400348077); e-book (9781400348084).

Gigi is returning to her childhood home on Mackinac Island broke and unemployed. Her meddling mother, Eloise, sets her up with a doctor, and Gigi agrees to go only if her mother goes on a date with a visiting Scottish author. The two set off on unexpected paths in a summer full of surprises in this humorous and poignant story of two generations of women set against the charming Mackinac Island backdrop. Gigi finds purpose in running for mayor, and her sister in Traverse City, who is struggling with infertility, becomes her campaign manager. Gigi reconnects with old friends and discovers the joy of a slow courtship with the doctor. Long-separated Eloise quickly becomes serious with the author and finally lets go of her ex. Gigi also learns things about her own parents' relationship, and her and her mother find themselves bonding as the summer progresses. Fans of Debbie Macomber may also enjoy this appealing story of falling in love on a small island. *—Amy Alessio*

The Tilting House.

By Ivonne Lamazares.

July 2025. 304p. Counterpoint, $27 (9781640097094); e-book (9781640097100).

It's a hot, uncomfortable summer in 1993 in the Paladero neighborhood of Havana during the during the so-called "special period" after Cuba lost Soviet support, and citizens had to stoically endure the resulting austerity. Teenager Yuri lives with her Aunt Ruth, who, as food is scarce, is trying to find Yuri's father so that Yuri can live with him, but no such luck. However, a relative does appear: Mariela, fresh from la yuma (the U.S.), bringing with her prosperity, torturous family secrets, resentment, and fancy sanitary napkins. The presence of Mariela—Yuri's cousin or her sister?—tilts Yuri's world on its axis. Lamazares (*The Sugar Island,* 2000) tells this difficult story in four parts from Yuri's aching perspective in present-day New York. Revisiting that fateful summer, Yuri weighs her innocence and complicity in the events that unfolded after Mariela's disruptive arrival. Amid the complicated power relationships of Paladero, among Party agents and black-market wranglers, petty criminals and intellectuals, Yuri survives and eventually thrives, far from her native land, and with the added weight of guilt and regret. *—Sara Martínez*

YA: *Young adult readers will be intrigued by Yuri's situation and choices as a teen facing moral dilemmas in survival mode. SM.*

The Uproar.

By Karim Dimechkie.

June 2025. 384p. Little, Brown, $29 (9780316581189).

What happens when everything you believe about yourself is challenged by a series of events seemingly out of your control? Dimechkie's (*Lifted by the Great Nothing*, 2015) second novel tackles this question. Sharif selflessly works as a social worker for a nonprofit and desperately loves his wife, Adjoua. Living in Brooklyn, struggling to make ends meet, the couple wants to temporarily rehome their unruly but beloved dog, Judy, before the birth of their daughter, who will need intensive medical care. Desperate, Sharif enlists Emmanuel, an undocumented Haitian immigrant he vaguely knows, and everything goes completely sideways, ending with Emmanuel's son accusing Sharif of assault. The optics are bad, but if Sharif absolutely did not commit the terrible crime he's accused of, then what did happen that day? There is so much stress and discomfort in this book, which is also its strength, making the reader complicit in assumptions before blowing them out of the water. It would make a great book discussion book. *—Kathy Sexton*

Vera, or Faith.

By Gary Shteyngart.

July 2025. 256p. Random, $28 (9780593595091); e-book (9780593595107).

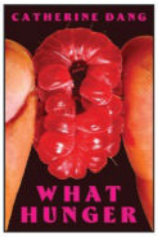
Vera is an anxious, remarkably self-aware, and verbally gifted 10-year-old living with her father, stepmom, and half brother in Manhattan in Shteyngart's (*Our Country Friends*, 2021) witty and tenderhearted satirical bildungsroman. Vera does not remember her Korean biological mother, Mom Mom, and often feels left out of the family. She has few friends at school, and her intellect makes her a target of derision. Her only friend may be her AI chessboard, Kaspie. Shteyngart dots the narrative with elements of slightly speculative fiction (Kaspie can do much more than play chess, and the smart cars are *very* smart). It is a tumultuous time politically. Dad Igor is hoping to sell his struggling magazine to the "Rhodesian Billionaire," and a new voting rights bill has been proposed. The 5/3 law would give citizens who can trace their lineage to the Mayflower more voting power because they have become marginalized. The clever satire, sociopolitical skewering, and nimble wordplay are quintessential Shteyngart. Vera (which means "faith" in Russian) is a wonderfully sympathetic character. This is another winner from a distinctive voice. *—Bill Kelly*

What Hunger.

By Catherine Dang.

Aug. 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster, $27.99 (9781668065570).

Dang follows up her 2021 debut *Nice Girls* with this powerful bildungsroman. Ronny Nguyen is just fourteen years old when two life-changing events rock her world in quick succession: her beloved older brother, Tommy, is killed in a car accident, and she's raped at a party by a classmate. During the assault, Ronny fights back, biting off the earlobe of Michael, the boy attacking her—and getting a taste for raw meat in the process. Ronny begins seeking out raw meat from the local butcher. While at home, she watches her parents go through the grieving process and spends time with her aunt, who has come to stay with her family for Tommy's funeral. Dang mingles mouth-watering descriptions of the Vietnamese dishes the Nguyen family makes with raw, vivid depictions of Ronny's cravings for bloody meat, both animal and human. Female cannibals are having a moment (see Lucy Rose's *The Lamb*, 2025) and Dang uses the metaphor to expertly explore Ronny's deep rage and grief over the devastating losses of her brother and her virginity, as well as how she reclaims her power; and in doing so, she finds a deeper connection with her family and her heritage. Intense, visceral, and not to be missed. *—Kristine Huntley*



YA: *Teens, especially girls, will relate to Ronny's struggles with rage and grief, with cautionary warnings for sexual assault and death. KH.*

When the Road Comes Around.

By Katie Powner.

Aug. 2025. 368p. Bethany House, paper, $18.99 (9780764245169); e-book (9781493451005).

Dan and Anita Wilson, along with 20-year-old son Sam, whose "brain had stopped keeping up with his body," have a peaceful life on their Montana guest ranch. They hire young neighbor Tad Bungley to help over the summer, despite his bad reputation. He lives with his single dad, who doesn't think he'll amount to much, but Tad builds a rapport with Sam. When Maddie Pine, a rich girl Tad knew in school, shows up at the ranch, he doesn't trust her. He also notices strange things happening at the back of the Wilson's property. The Wilsons teach both Tad and Maddie grace through their example during a challenging summer. Anita, who has rheumatoid arthritis, realizes that she can't always be there to protect Sam, who yearns for independence. She and Dan need to trust God and do their best to help Sam navigate the world. Powner (*The Wind Blows in Sleeping Grass*, 2023) writes believable, genuine characters, especially Dan and Anita, who live out their faith. Readers who like heartfelt family stories will enjoy this book. *—Cynthia Hammell*

YA: *Young adult readers will relate to the family-relationship challenges and struggles for independence that Sam, Tad, and Maddie, who are in their early twenties, experience. CH.*

Crime Fiction

All the Words We Know.

By Bruce Nash.

July 2025. 240p. Atria, $26.99 (9781668053607); e-book (9781668053621).

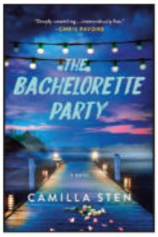
Rose, who has dementia, lives in an assisted living facility, visited by her two dutiful children. One day her good friend falls out of a window and dies, the first in a series of puzzling events. Rose changes rooms, and the man who takes her old room dies. Consulting the big diary that her son keeps up-to-date for her, she adds her own thoughts, including the fact she believes she is in danger. Roaming the facility and eavesdropping, Rose thwarts the Angry Nurse and the Scare Manager as she tries to work out what is wrong at the facility. Sharing her story in a rambling, stream-of-consciousness monologue, she struggles to summon the correct words for objects or thoughts. With flashes of insight and assisted by the nice boy who mops the floors and the fellow who doesn't live here, she manages to ferret out the secrets of the facility, and with her children's help, metes out justice, while reclaiming pieces of her past. A realistic portrayal of living with dementia by a feisty, unreliable narrator. —*Sue O'Brien*

★ The Bachelorette Party.

By Camilla Sten.

June 2025. 304p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250868503); e-book (9781250868510).

Sten's latest (after *The Resting Place*, 2022) is another dark, violent, nightmarish, explosive tale that's utterly riveting. In 2012, four young women went to Isle Blind, a remote island in the Swedish archipelago, for one last drunken celebration before settling into adulthood. The women disappeared without a trace. While the reader gets a horrific glimpse of what happened, the women's families and friends never know their fate. Fast forward to 2022. Bride-to-be Annaliese wants to throw a bachelorette party on Isle Blind. Annaliese's best friend, Tessa Nilsson, is still recovering from a disaster involving her now-defunct podcast, and the other women, while appearing carefree and ready to party, are hiding their own secrets. At first, the get-together is fun, but things soon turn dark. When one of the women goes missing, and Tessa is the first to discover her gruesome fate, Tessa is convinced there's a link to the 2012 disappearances, that a deadly killer is loose on the island, and that she and the remaining women will be the next victims unless they band together. With heart-palpitating action, pulse-pounding suspense, and grisly violence, this Scandi noir is one that will cement Sten's place in the thriller-writing firmament. —*Emily Melton*



Blood and Treasure.

By Ryan Pote.

July 2025. 368p. Berkley, $30 (9780593953167); e-book (9780593953181).

What sounds like gunshots are heard aboard the International Space Station, and NASA staff attempt to make sense of the noise. Meanwhile, Ethan Cain is working with his crew aboard his ship off the coast of Mozambique to recover a stone chest from the ocean floor, just a step ahead of some mysterious and dangerous individuals. What no one knows is how these two events are connected, as various agencies are alerted to the situation and several individuals seek to either make some past wrongs right or correct mistakes made long ago. This fast-moving debut novel is an entertaining mash up of Andy Weir's *The Martian* (2014), a Tom Clancy thriller, and an Indiana Jones movie as it bounces from location to location: among the stars, below the sea, through the jungle, into the sky, and across the ocean. Readers will vigorously flip the pages as different powers and people attempt to gain, or retain, control of a weapon of a prior era capable of unleashing a cataclysm beyond the scale of a nuclear strike. —*Terrence Miltner*

Can You Solve the Murder? An Interactive Crime Novel.

By Antony Johnston.

July 2025. 304p. Penguin, paper, $18 (9780143138884); e-book (9780593513026).

Remember the choose-your-own-adventure books for kids? The reader was the main character, and at various points in the story, they'd have to choose from a small number of options, each of which directed the reader to a different page in the book. The new novel by the prolific, multigenre author Johnston (*The Dog Sitter Detective*, 2023) is a choose-your-own-adventure for grown-ups, and it's a lot of fun. The reader is a detective chief inspector investigating a murder at Elysium, an upscale health spa. As the reader follows the clues and evaluates the evidence, he or she is faced with a series of choices: whether to (for example) question a receptionist or keep going across a bridge. Each choice the reader makes sends the story off in a new direction. A book like this stands or falls on the strength of its story (which is genuinely suspenseful and surprising) and the choices presented to the reader (which are clever and entirely logical within the context of the investigation). A satisfying mystery, well presented, and one that invites multiple readings. —*David Pitt*

Carved in Blood.

By Michael Bennett.

July 2025. 384p. Atlantic Monthly, $27 (9780802164544); e-book (9780802164551).

Māori ex-cop Hana Westerman confronts hard truths about family, love, and identity in this third series entry (following *Return to Blood*, 2024), lending a heartfelt twist to sharp social commentary. Hana's kept a vigilant eye on local gangs preying on the Māori teens in her Tata Bay youth program, but that doesn't stop the underworld from taking a vengeful swipe at her family. When Hana's ex-husband and closest friend, Jaye, is gravely wounded while intervening in a robbery, Hana jumps on the invitation to join the Auckland force's investigation. They quickly identify a suspect: teenage felon Toa Davis' fingerprints pepper the getaway car. Toa's on the run, but not just from the police—he claims the car disappeared before the robbery, along with a delivery of the ruthless Blue Moon gang's drugs. But something about the shooter's interaction with Jaye signals to Hana that the shooting was not an accident but was meant to be an execution. Davis is the next to show up dead. Another winner for this stellar series. —*Christine Tran*

Ceylon Sapphires.

By Mailan Doquang.

June 2025. 304p. Mysterious, $26.95 (9781613166475); e-book (9781613166482).

In *Blood Rubies* (2024), jewel thief Rune Sarasin rescued her soulmate Kit's sister by indenturing herself to ruthless trafficker Charles Lemaire. Unfortunately, Kit can't reconcile Rune's compulsive risk-taking, and he's left her with a broken heart and no reason to play it safe. Rune is determined to escape Lemaire or die trying, and his obsession with acquiring Napoleon Bonaparte's jewels offers an unexpected opportunity. While she's swiping Josephine's earrings, Rune discovers that the family scion abuses his wife, Romy, and recognizes the trapped heiress as a potential ally. Rune dives underground in Amsterdam, Paris, and beyond, barely evading Lemaire and Interpol as she painstakingly lines up her plan to take down both abusers at once. Although readers introduced to Rune in *Blood Rubies* are privy to a deeper understanding of her motivations, newcomers will find a gripping adventure here. Doquang's evocative descriptions of Europe's backstreets and Rune's fast-thinking strategic moves will appeal to both espionage and heist fans, especially those seeking a cat burglar with depth. —*Christine Tran*

The Cleaner.

By Mary Watson.

July 2025. 400p. Crown, paper, $18 (9798217085910); e-book (9798217085927).

Esmie's smart, handsome brother Nico earned a scholarship to an Irish university to complete his PhD, and off he went, much to the dismay of his obsessively adoring sister and his obsessively possessive fiancée, Simone. At first, his letters home were happy and optimistic, especially after he fell in love with one of the women (whose name he never mentioned) at the Woodlands, the estate where he was staying. But things soon changed. Nico lost his scholarship and returned home a different person—surly, silent, and with a dangerous drug habit. Esmie vowed to seek revenge for Nico. Posing as a cleaner, she is hired to tidy the homes of the three sisters who live at the Woodlands, and while polishing and dusting, she sifts through their possessions for clues about what caused Nico's downfall. Watson's adult debut is full of damaged characters, mind-boggling twists, and tension that ratchets up to a fever pitch. It's a dark, sinister, oppressive, utterly riveting book about obsession, lies, and revenge and is guaranteed to keep readers mesmerized until the shocking finish. —*Emily Melton*

Death of an Ex.

By Delia Pitts.

July 2025. 320p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250904249); e-book (9781250904256).

Pitts brings us back to Queenstown, New Jersey, where Vandy Myrick, the only Black female private investigator in town, has a new mystery to solve that hits a little too close to home. About two years after the events in *Trouble in Queenstown* (2024), Vandy is still just trying to live her solitary, sober life as best as she can. Enter her ex-husband, Philip Bolden, back in town to turn Vandy's world upside down. The two reconnect and spend a night together before Philip is found dead after leaving her place. Now Vandy must uncover the truth of what led to his murder while also dealing with the guilt of her involvement. As she gathers the pieces, Vandy has to face the realization that her ex was involved in more schemes than she imagined—and those close to her now could suffer for it. Vandy is still a realistically flawed character with a big heart and a sense of justice. Pitts once again delivers a twisting mystery that deals with classism, race, and grief. —*Alejandra Santana*

Deep Dive.

By Terry Shames.

July 2025. 240p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448316274); e-book (9781448316823).

Jessie Madison's dream was to be on the FBI's Underwater Search and Evidence Rescue Team (USERT), but when her younger sister's life is in danger, Jessie goes AWOL to save her and is kicked out of the training program. Desolate, she flees to the Bahamas to work as a dive instructor. After a harrowing diving ordeal that almost costs Jessie her life, she returns home. Then two FBI agents show up. Soon, Jessie is being helicoptered in to replace an injured USERT member on a top-secret diving mission in the Mediterranean. But on the dive boat, the other team members are lukewarm and suspicious. The mission—to retrieve documents from a WWII German plane that's sunk deep below the surface—is supremely risky, and only a seasoned diver will succeed. Then dangerous "accidents" start happening, and it seems someone is set on sabotage. The tension rachets up to a nerve-jangling level, and with taut suspense, scary moments beneath the sea, and a surprising conclusion, this twisty, watery tale is a must-read thriller. —*Emily Melton*

Dogged Pursuit.

By David Rosenfelt.

July 2025. 288p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250324511); e-book (9781250324528).

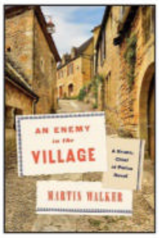
After 30 novels of trial lawyer Andy Carpenter outfoxing villains who have underrated him, author Rosenfelt (*The More the Terrier*, 2024) gives his hero an origin story. We read that defense attorney Carpenter began as, of all things, a prosecutor. But something that drives so many storybook PIs was missing: justice. He comes to believe it's beside the point in a system best at smashing the poor; he'd at least feel better on the other side. Then he meets the dog, golden retriever Tara, and adopts her immediately. He'll tell you she's smarter than he is—and things go best when he does what she wants. A new case emerges when he tries to also adopt Tara's friend Sunny, and Carpenter's crime-solving begins. Girlfriend Nicole backs away when she sees how dangerous his new life is; but Carpenter is warming to someone new, a protective female PI. It's all there: his love of sports, dodgy relations with the cops, low-brow defensiveness—and how he got that way. Fans old and new will enjoy the story. —*Don Crinklaw*

An Enemy in the Village.

By Martin Walker.

July 2025. 304p. Knopf, $28 (9780593536643); e-book (9780593536650).

Bruno Courrèges, the chief of police of the tiny French village of St. Denis and parts of the Vézère Valley in southwestern France, has an enviable beat. Bruno's patrol includes archaeological sites (like the famous prehistoric caves), elaborate châteaux, and glorious natural scenery. He consults with his boss, the Mayor, at to-die-for restaurants and wine bars. He polices the weekly village outdoor market, rides his horse in the countryside, coaches the local youngsters in tennis and rugby, and hosts elaborate meals for his friends. But as cushy a job as it may seem, in each of Martin Walker's novels (*A Grave in the Woods,* 2024), Bruno still has to solve a crime. The central mystery here is that of a woman found dead in a car alongside letters to her husband, lawyer, and business partner, and an empty pack of sleeping pills. What seems like a closed case of suicide spans out into a multitude of possible motives triggered by the woman's fortune. Bruno himself becomes the brunt of slander that could capsize his career. Not for fans of traditional police procedurals, but Bruno mysteries offer a feast of history, archeology, food, and atmosphere, along with the intriguing character of Bruno himself. —*Connie Fletcher*



Everyone Is Lying to You.

By Jo Piazza.

July 2025. 336p. Dutton, paper, $19 (9798217046478); e-book (9798217046485).

Following *The Sicilian Inheritance* (2024), Piazza is back with another page-turner, this one taking on the world of motherhood influencers. Lizzie is a magazine editor whose job in journalism is hanging on by a thread, with longform reporting being replaced by the sparkle of the influencer. Lizzie knows one of these magic nymphs: her long-lost college best friend, Rebecca, whose social grid displays a life of homemade bread, glowing hair and skin, barefoot children, and a spotless home. Lizzie quickly learns that the grid is far from realism when a cry for help from her former bestie launches Lizzie into curious action. Lizzie must use her razor-sharp reporting skills to parse the truth about Rebecca's husband and conservative community. Set against the backdrop of a luxe mommy-influencer conference and Rebecca's pristine desert mansion, the drama is as juicy as the setting and characters. Like Piazza's other fiction, this novel is totally engrossing from start to finish. Readers will be slow to forget Rebecca, Lizzie, and the worlds they represent. —*Courtney Eathorne*

The Frozen People.

By Elly Griffiths.

July 2025. 304p. Viking/Pamela Dorman, $30 (9780593834374); e-book (9780593834381).

The author of the popular Ruth Galloway crime series introduces a new heroine, police officer Ali Dawson, recruited to work on cold cases for a low-profile new division, the department of logistics. Once on the job, Ali is shocked to learn that these cases are so cold they must be solved by traveling in time. When a prominent government minister requests that Ali personally clear the name of his great-great-grandfather, suspected of murdering three women in the 1850s, Ali accepts the assignment with trepidation. Until now, officers have travelled back only as far as the 1970s and never alone. Ali's trip to Victorian London is successful—until she tries to return. Making matters worse, her son Finn, a special adviser to the government minister, is suddenly in serious trouble, and needs Ali's help. Griffiths expertly builds a world where time travel is new, top-secret, and filled with unpredictable glitches and opportunities. Some loose ends in the story hold the promise that readers will see more of Ali in the future. —*Jane Harper*

The Game Is Afoot.

By Elise Bryant.

July 2025. 368p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593640807); e-book (9780593640814).

When her daughter Pearl's soccer coach dies on the field under suspicious circumstances, Mavis knows she may have another mystery to solve among the parents and teachers in their lives. Fresh from uncovering criminals at her daughter's school in *It's Elementary* (2024), Mavis decides to investigate who was angry enough with Coach Cole to poison him. But this busy mom has plenty of other things going on: running Pearl's birthday party, becoming surprise-appointed class mom, rage-quitting her job during a disastrous DEI workshop, discovering her elderly father's true crime podcast, and balancing her new boyfriend with overtures from her ex-husband. Among all of this, her investigations only uncover more games, from that of slippery, MLM scheming mom Bethany to the blackmail involved in the cast list of the school play. Is there no one among the parents, teachers, and coaches of the school community who can be trusted? Intrepid Mavis is a funny, smart, realistic parent and sleuth. Bryant's series is a welcome addition to the genre. —*Amy Alessio*

The Goldens.

By Lauren Wilson.

July 2025. 304p. Flatiron/Pine & Cedar, $28.99 (9781250362308); e-book (9781250362315).

Chloe Hughes begins her first year at elite Dern University with high hopes of studying literature and becoming a successful novelist. With her modest background and lack of confidence, she is overlooked by her posh classmates until beautiful, fabulously wealthy social media influencer Clara Holland takes Chloe under her wing. Clara invites Chloe to move into her parents' lavish country estate, where the two plan elaborate parties and photograph everything for Clara's multitude of followers. Before long, Clara invites more like-minded young women to join them, and they become known as the Goldens—not a cult, thinks Chloe, and certainly not under the control of Clara, who surely has everyone's best interests at heart. But when a girl goes missing after a party, Chloe begins to pay more attention to disturbing rumors about other young women from Clara's past. Meeting Clara changed Chloe's life, but will their continued friendship put it at risk? This debut thriller will have strong appeal to readers who enjoy psychological suspense from authors like Freida McFadden and Lisa Jewell. —*Jane Harper*

YA: *The prestigious university setting, glittering parties, and an inside look at the life of a prominent social media influencer will appeal to teens looking for a twisty escapist read. JH.*

The Good Liar.

By Denise Mina.

July 2025. 336p. Little, Brown/Mulholland, $29 (9780316243049); e-book (9780316243247).

Dr. Claudia Atkins O'Sheil, a professor at the Royal College of Forensic Sciences, is a renowned expert on blood spatter. She and her sponsor, Sir Philip Ardmore, are on their way to a gala, where she will give a speech about her career to London's elite. It will feature her experience with the Chester Terrace Murders, a horrific case. A father and his fiancée were brutally stabbed in their home, and Claudia's work helped to convict his son of the crimes. Claudia, a widow raising two sons, now faces a difficult dilemma. Someone has determined that her evidence was incorrect, and she knows it. That person is about to go public and destroy her. Will Claudia use her presentation to admit her mistake and ruin her career or continue her complicity while the real murderer sits in the audience? Mina (*Confidence*, 2022) will keep readers in suspense as she weaves a complex web of personal and professional relationships with gruesome crime-scene details and high-stakes life choices. Mystery fans will love this. —*Barbara Bibel*

Her Many Faces.

By Nicci Cloke.

July 2025. 336p. Morrow, $30 (9780063395046); e-book (9780063395060).

Katherine. Katie. Killer Kate. K.C. Kit-Kat. This is how Katherine Cole, on trial for quadruple murder, is known by her father, friend, lawyer, former lover, and a news reporter. Each man shares his perspective on her life as they have seen it, in the past and present: as daddy's little girl, a fantastic headline, an intense lover that pushed boundaries, a bold and sometimes dark school friend, and an untrustworthy client. Cloke (*Toxic*, 2018) guides readers through a disjointed timeline of Katie's life according to these men, highlighting that a good portion of her issues seems to stem from conspiracy-theory chat forums. Katie and her family suffered the loss of her brother in Afghanistan, and while searching for answers to help her through her grief, she was pulled into her first online forums about 9/11. Then she was pulled into a much darker world, deeper into conspiracies about world events and leaders, which seemingly culminated with the four men she is accused of killing. Thriller enthusiasts who like multiple perspectives and unreliable narrators will enjoy this read. —*Amia Wheatley*

History Lessons.

By Zoe B. Wallbrook.

July 2025. 384p. Soho, $25.95 (9781641295529); e-book (9781641295536).

Wallbrook's debut is chockablock with themes, plots, and subplots: a murder mystery, a frank and disturbing assessment of how women—especially Black women—are treated in society in general and in academia in particular, an examination of racism and violence against women, a love story, and insight into the importance of love and support from family and friends. Daphne Ouverture defied her family's expectations by getting her PhD in history and accepting a tenure-track position at prestigious Harrison University. She's barely started at Harrison when she receives a cryptic text message from Sam Taylor, whose telegenic looks, charm, intelligence, published papers and books, and multiple television appearances make him the darling of the university. The day after Daphne receives Sam's text, he's found murdered, and Daphne's treasured copy of *Papillon* goes missing. Daphne uncovers terrible secrets, putting her life in grave danger. But her investigation also introduces her to police consultant and bookstore owner Rowan, who's definitely boyfriend material. Funny, touching, and extraordinary, this sometimes dark series starter delivers strong messages about life and the importance of sticking to one's principles —*Emily Melton*

Hollow Spaces.

By Victor Suthammanont.

Aug. 2025. 384p. Counterpoint, $28 (9781640097117); e-book (9781640097124).

John Lo, born in America of Chinese parents, often suffered from racial stereotyping. After marrying fellow lawyer Jane, they had two kids, daughter Brennan and son Hunter, and John's on track to become a partner at his law firm. Then a steamy affair with an associate, Jessica, threatens to destroy all of his achievements. When Jessica is found murdered, John becomes the prime suspect. Despite a jury finding him not guilty, his life is destroyed. Years later, Brennan, now a lawyer herself, and Hunter, a journalist, return to New York when they learn their mother has terminal cancer. But there's a second reason for their return. Still torn on whether their dad killed Jessica, they vow to uncover the truth. But as they investigate, they find a complex set of truths, half-truths, and lies. With its strong messages about racism, sexism, jealousy, lust, and love plus deeply flawed and often unlikable characters, graphic sex, physical and psychological trauma, and a bleak view of humanity, hard-core thriller fans will find the pulse-pounding twists and unexpected turns in Suthammanont's debut gripping. —*Emily Melton*

Hotel Ukraine.

By Martin Cruz Smith.

July 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster, $27.99 (9781982188382); e-book (9781982188405).

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine plunges both countries into turmoil, the Russian deputy minister of defense is murdered. Arkady Renko, the veteran investigator, is assigned to investigate. Methodically following the trail of evidence and clues, Renko zeroes in on a paramilitary group operating out of Russia. But he doesn't anticipate the shocking revelation of who is behind this group's activities. Renko's investigation is hampered, too, by his Parkinson's disease, with which he was diagnosed in Smith's previous novel (the tenth in the Renko series), 2023's *Independence Square*. Smith, who himself was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1995—and kept it a secret for many years—does a masterful job of giving the reader a vivid, even tactile sense of what it is like to navigate daily life with the disease. Arkady Renko is one of modern crime fiction's greatest creations, a man who will suffer anything—professional failure, ridicule, heartbreak, and now Parkinson's—in his pursuit of the truth. As a whole, the Renko series is among the genre's most consistent and compelling. —*David Pitt*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: The Arkady Renko books are very popular, and references to current events and the author's own experiences will boost interest from readers.

In Pursuit of Beauty.

By Gary Baum.

July 2025. 256p. Blackstone, $28.99 (9798874863845).

In Baum's debut, innovative genius Dr. Roya Delshad pursues attainable beauty for all, even if that means taking illegal measures. Roya's turn as the Robin Hood of plastic surgeons has now landed her in prison for insurance fraud, and she's counting on reporter Wes Easton to share her beliefs with the world. Through his interviews with the spirited and overtly sexual surgeon, Wes quickly falls under her spell, and the lines between subject and writer are irretrievably crossed. Baum has created an intriguing commentary on beauty standards and the risks we take to achieve them. His background in journalism is evident in the story, and the rapid-fire interviewing between the two characters feels authentic. Roya is an especially compelling character as she manages to be both charming, with her quick wit, and off-putting, with her delusional approach to providing beauty to the world. Fans of Jessie Gaynor's *The Glow* (2024) will appreciate Baum's take on the topic. *—Elizabeth Reiser*

Inner Space.

By Jakub Szamalek. Tr. by Kasia Beresford.

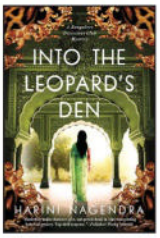
July 2025. 352p. HarperVia, paper, $18.99 (9780063377943); e-book (9780063377974).

In Szamalek's debut, readers join the crew of the International Space Station (ISS)—four Americans and two Russians—as they live in cramped, noisy, smelly spaces high above Earth. The Americans are trying to track down what appears to be a slowly growing concentration of ammonia in their air. It could possibly be traced to their controversial cooling system. The Russians are making a big deal out of it in the space lab and on the ground. They are a failing enterprise, and any excuse for quitting that puts blame on the U.S. is reason enough to be belligerent. During a solar flare, the U.S. personnel hear a loud bang and, upon looking at videos of the event, discover evidence that one of the Russians was in their part of the station during that time. The leader of the ISS team is given strict instructions from ground control to investigate but to trust no one else with what she finds. What follows is a Crichtonesque cascade of mistakes and misunderstandings in an all-too-plausible but entertaining thriller. *—Don Vicha*

Into the Leopard's Den.

By Harini Nagendra.

July 2025. 320p. Pegasus, $27.95 (9781639368976); e-book (9781639368983).



Kaveri Murthy, star of the Bangalore Detectives Club Mystery series by Nagendra (*A Nest of Vipers,* 2024), is one of the most fun-to-follow detectives in contemporary fiction. Young and recently married, Murthy lives under the tight restrictions of the British Raj as well as the repressiveness of her mother-in-law and traditional rules governing women's behavior. Nevertheless, since the series started, Murthy has managed to obtain a mathematics degree and establish her own detective agency that champions cases involving the downtrodden. In this, the fourth in the series, set in 1922, Kaveri is pregnant but still active, investigating both the murder of an old woman in Bangalore and a series of murders in the region of Coorg, where her doctor husband is working to establish a clinic. The book focuses here on the maltreatment of Indian workers (including children) in factories and on coffee plantations by the British empire. Nagendra, a professor of sustainability at Azim Premji University in Bangalore, also shines a light on environmental abuses, showing how the profit-hungry British overseers expanded plantations, resulting in loss of wildlife, and overworked the land, resulting in withered crops. Fascinating throughout, but best understood by readers who have followed Kaveri from the start of the series. *—Connie Fletcher*

Mean Moms.

By Emma Rosenblum.

July 2025. 304p. Flatiron, $28.99 (9781250364203); e-book (9781250364210).

Mom wars turn nefarious in Rosenblum's latest (after *Very Bad Company*, 2024). At Atherton, a ritzy academy in New York City, students are the richest of the rich—children of celebrities, tycoons, and supermodels. Parents throw their wealth around at lavish, themed fundraisers, and the gossip flies in group chats and snarky comments. The school rotates around three women: Frost and Belle, who inherited their wealth, and Morgan, who married up. Sofia, new to the school, ingratiates herself on the first day. They settle into a friendship routine, but their illicit actions hide in the background. Morgan decides to start a business just as Belle is getting ready to launch hers. Frost is sleeping with Morgan's husband. And Sofia was cut off from all her money when she got divorced. But then Frost is hit by a scooter, Morgan's business is robbed, and the threats ramp up from there. One of the moms is sabotaging the others—but which one? Scandalous and juicy, this is *Pretty Little Liars* all grown up. Take it on your next beach trip. *—Cari Dubiel*

The Medici Curse.

By Daco S. Auffenorde.

July 2025. 336p. Scarlet, paper, $17.95 (9781613166413); e-book (9781613166420).

As a child, Anna de' Medici Rossi suffered from severe night terrors, frequently wandering far from her bed with no recollection of how she got there. When her mother died from a tumble down the stairs of the historic family villa, many speculated that Anna was at fault, especially when a priceless family necklace that is rumored to be cursed disappeared after the death. Sixteen years later, Anna, an aspiring artist, returns to Tuscany to take ownership of the villa that she has inherited, but questions about her mother's death and the missing necklace loom large. As Anna reacquaints herself with the house, her family, and old friends, she is plagued by mysterious visions and half-remembered memories that have her questioning her sanity and her involvement in the long-ago tragedy. Auffenorde (*The Forgotten Girl*, 2022) deftly builds the tension, offering plenty of eerie atmosphere with a hint of the supernatural. Add in family members harboring potentially nefarious secrets and a creepy housekeeper and gothic readers are sure to be pleased. *—Halle Carlson*

Milo's Reckoning.

By Joseph Olshan.

June 2025. 279p. Green City, $28 (9781963101089); e-book (9781963101140).

Milo Rossi, a graduate student in Italian at NYU, gets a call informing him that his mentor, Lenny D'Ambrosio, hanged himself after Milo left his apartment the night before. But Lenny had asked him to call the next day, leading Milo to question the police's official verdict of suicide, and he grows deeply unsettled by connections that begin to form between Lenny's death and that of Milo's younger brother six years earlier. The trail takes him by foot and public transport around the metropolitan New York area of the early 1990s and its academic environs, where he catches the occasional glimpse of the World Trade Center and somehow manages life with payphones. Milo eventually travels to Italy where dangerous answers lie. Dark truths emerge and he faces an enormous reckoning and reconciliation. This is Olshan's eleventh novel, the first since *Black Diamond Fall* (2018), and he once again delivers an exquisitely nuanced novel with the mesmerizing clarity for which he is known. The reader is by Milo's side on every step of his harrowing journey. *—Jane Murphy*

The Misplaced Physician.

By Jeri Westerson.

July 2025. 224p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448314812); e-book (9781448316816).

Westerson's latest in her Irregular Detective series (after *The Mummy of Mayfair*, 2024) is set in 1895 London. Former street urchin Tim Badger had a penchant for petty crimes before joining Sherlock Holmes' Baker Street Irregulars. Being an Irregular led him to become a detective just like his idol, Mr. Holmes, and to establish—with his friend Ben Watson—his own detective agency. Badger and Watson's latest case is both highly personal and their most challenging yet. Dr. John Watson, Holmes' trusted associate, is kidnapped, and with Holmes away on a secret government mission, it's up to Badger and Watson—with help from Ellsie Littleton, reporter for London's *Daily Chronicle,* staunch feminist, and the object of Tim's affections—to find Dr. Watson. The three discover the motive based on clues left behind by Dr. Watson and experience thrilling but dangerous adventures, including stealing a locomotive and foiling the kidnappers at a remote country house. Filled with vivid period details, this is a charming, witty, heartwarming, enthralling read that will appeal to a wide range of mystery fans. *—Emily Melton*

Murder in Pitigliano.

By Camilla Trinchieri.

July 2025. 368p. Soho, $29.95 (9781641296953); e-book (9781641296960).

As of *The Road to Murder,* 2024, retired New York homicide detective Nico Doyle has resettled in Gravino, Italy, unexpectedly discovering a new beginning with found family, food-forward village life, and mysteries that illuminate life's joys and tragedies. But when Nico agrees to help a young girl clear her father's name, he wades into a tangle of betrayals evocative of the region's Machiavellian history. The girl's father, Saverio, is accused of murdering his embezzling business partner, Giancarlo. Unfortunately, Saverio's gone on the lam, which hasn't helped his case with the Pitigliano carabinieri. The case looks bad for Saverio, who publicly attacked Giancarlo hours before he was found bludgeoned to death in their store. Giancarlo, Nico learns, was disloyal on every level, sowing plenty of motive-worthy discontent, especially among those affected by his serial affairs. Series fans will savor the evolution of Nico's relationships along with the mystery's satisfying unraveling. Readers seeking well-crafted mysteries like Louise Penny's or M.L. Longworth's will enjoy Trinchieri's fine story-craft as much as they do the Tuscan setting. —*Christine Tran*

Murder on the Books.

By Toni LoTempio.

July 2025. 240p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448315260); e-book (9781448315277).

Charley James put all her energy into her career as best-selling thriller author C. J. Barrett. But now, burned out after years of writing, she decides to leave New York for her small hometown in Pennsylvania. Once she arrives, she's delighted to meet up with Zane, her best friend from high school. When Zane informs Charley that the woman she planned to open a combined bookstore and bakery with has left town unexpectedly, it seems perfectly natural that Charley should jump in and open the bookstore side of the new business. But when Charley's clearing out the bookstore's basement, she makes a grizzly discovery—a woman who's been stabbed and stuffed into a chest. Her natural nosiness kicks in—but Charley has taken on almost more than she can handle, and even with the help of hunky detective Ian Grant, she finds herself in grave danger from a deadly killer. If this first book in LoTempio's new Cozy Bookshop series is any indication, Charley James will continue to charm readers—and nab the baddies—in many delightful future adventures. —*Emily Melton*

Never Odd or Even.

By Frank M. Young.

June 2025. 160p. Stark House, paper, $15.95 (9798886011470).

Casablanca is a great film. So is *Vertigo*. *The Searchers*, too. But Charles Jerome, the Hollywood director and protagonist of *Never Odd or Even*, knows what's wrong with every last one of them: they're scripted, rehearsed, staged. Not *real.* He aches to take gritty cinéma vérité documentary techniques to the next level. He's going to get really real and make the perfect crime film about a bank robbery: so he'll rob a bank for real. He hires a crook to lead the theft, an actress to distract the bank guard, and gathers the rest of his film-making team. But for all their efforts, the resulting film looks like . . . a soft-edged noir movie. What are they to do? Frank M. Young, known for his expertise in comic history, digs into the strange and often puzzling world of film-making. It's a charming book, but readers may have problems with its apparently satiric aim, given that it depicts things pretty realistically rather than exaggerating. —*Don Crinklaw*

Night Watcher.

By Daphne Woolsoncroft.

July 2025. 336p. Grand Central, $29 (9781538770900); e-book (9781538770924).

Years ago, young Nola Strate narrowly escaped from a serial killer known as the Hiding Man. She escaped, but barely, and she carries the psychological scars to this day. Now she hosts a radio call-in show, *Night Watch*, and she lives in a constant state of, if not outright fear, abundant caution. When a few things happen that feel too much to be mere coincidence, Nola tries her damnedest not to panic, but eventually she becomes convinced that the Hiding Man has returned and intends to do what he could not do decades ago. This is the first novel for Woolsoncroft, who hosts the popular true-crime podcast *Going West*, and it's a real corker: smartly plotted, surprising, and genuinely frightening. The author takes some risks in the novel—there are character revelations and plot twists that might not have worked if they hadn't been so deftly handled—but they all pay off. It might be a first novel, but this reads like it's been written by a genre veteran. Readers will eagerly await Woolsoncroft's next offering. —*David Pitt*

No Body No Crime.

By Tess Sharpe.

July 2025. 304p. MCD, $29 (9780374614423); e-book (9780374614430).

When the PI who practically raised Mel Tillman dies, she charges Mel, 24 and now a PI herself, with her final job. But for Mel, finding Chloe Harper is more than that. Before she vanished, Chloe was a rancher's daughter, a princess in their rural town, and the girl who's had Mel's heart in her hands since they accidentally killed someone together after Chloe's sweet sixteen. Though they'd kept every aspect of their teenage relationship a secret, Mel was undone by Chloe's disappearance and the tragedies that followed. But the Chloe Harper that Mel is sent to find is not the one she remembers. She's living off the grid, building vicious booby traps, and hiding from a past Mel has no idea about. But she's still Chloe Harper, and Mel could never look away. Character development, typically one of Sharpe's (*Barbed Wire Heart*, 2018) great strengths, is sacrificed somewhat here for pace. But it's that propulsive pace, jumping between time lines and characters, that makes this sapphic thriller eminently readable. Ultimately a pulse-pounding adventure. —*Maggie Reagan*

YA: *There are shades here of Sharpe's YA thriller,* The Girls I've Been *(2021), and the teen time line will reel in fans with a stomach for mild violence. MR.*

★ One Final Turn.

By Ashley Weaver.

June 2025. 304p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250350930); e-book (9781250350947).

This is the fifth and final history-romance-espionage novel in the Electra McDonnell series by Ashley Weaver (*Locked in Persuit,* 2024), starring a woman raised by her locksmith uncle and an extended family of thieves, and trained in the arts of breaking and entering, safe-cracking, picking locks and pockets, and searching for potential marks. His Majesty's Military Intelligence recruited Electra ("Ellie") to use her special talents for the war effort at series' start. The novels, narrated wittily and with sharp observations by Ellie, are set in war-torn England, especially focusing on the London Blitz. In this book, Weaver changes locale, as Ellie moves to Lisbon to find her cousin and other escapees from a German POW camp, bringing her simmering on-again, off-again romance with boss Major Ramsey with her. There's a definite swoon factor from the love and espionage angle here—readers will be reminded of Hitchcock's *Notorious* and Curtiz's *Casablanca* as Electra uses all her skills to once again thwart the secret plans of the Nazis. A rip-roaring finale for a terrific series. Fans of this series may want to try Weaver's Amory Ames series, the first installment of which, *Murder at the Brightwell* (2014), received an Edgar nomination. —*Connie Fletcher*

Our Last Resort.

By Clémence Michallon.

July 2025. 320p. Knopf, $29 (9780593802762); e-book (9780593802779).

Raised in a cult run by the charismatic leader Émile, Frida and Gabriel became close and began to refer to themselves as brother and sister. After Émile rapes Frida, she and Gabriel flee—once they exact retribution on Émile. After a tough few years, they finally settle in New York City. Gabriel meets and marries Annie, who then disappears; her body is eventually found in a nearby river. Gabriel is the primary suspect, but without concrete evidence, the police have no case. Under a continuing cloud of suspicion, Gabriel flees to Seattle, leaving Frida behind. A request from documentary makers to tell the story of Émile and the cult finally brings Gabriel and Frida back together. After traveling to Utah to meet the filmmakers, they soon find themselves suspects in the brutal murder of the young wife of a much older media mogul. When the truth is eventually revealed, it's as shocking as it is tragic. Alternating between the present and the past, this story is full of dark twists, shocking surprises, and strong messages about love, lies, loyalty, trust, suspicion, control, and connection. —*Emily Melton*

Rage.

By Linda Castillo.

July 2025. 304p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250781147); e-book (9781250781154).

Castillo's latest Kate Burkholder mystery (after *The Burning*, 2024) has the police chief in Painters Mill, Ohio, a small town in the heart of Amish country, facing a series of gruesome murders. Samuel Yutzy, a young Amish man, is found shot to death, his dismembered body buried in woods outside town. The body of a second victim, Samuel's friend, has been stuffed into a barrel. Then a young Amish woman is found dead, apparently shot while trying to evade her killer. Kate is determined to solve the disturbing and perplexing murders and begins the tedious investigative work, hitting dead end after dead end. Undaunted, she finally finds evidence that the murder victims were involved in a vicious sex-trafficking ring, a deeply troubling situation she never expected to confront in Painters Mill. Eventually, after nearly becoming a victim herself, she uncovers the brutal truth and ensures the killers are brought to justice. But the young women who've been trafficked will bear a lifetime of scars that may never heal. A gripping, shocking story—fortunately with some lighter moments to offset the violence and tension—from a gifted, award-winning writer who knows how to grab readers and keep them riveted from first page to last. —*Emily Melton*

LINDA
CASTILLO
RAGE

Savvy Summers and the Sweet Potato Crimes.

By Sandra Jackson-Opoku.

July 2025. 336p. Minotaur, $28 (9781250351906); e-book (9781250351913).

Widow Savvy Summers, owner of Essie's Place, offers soul food in her cheerful restaurant on Chicago's South Side. At Matilda and Grandy Jaspers' fiftieth-wedding-anniversary party at Essie's Place, Matilda publicly humiliates her cheating husband. The next morning Grandy stops by the restaurant for his usual morning breakfast and dies after eating some of Savvy's sweet-potato pie. Although the pie is quickly cleared as the cause of death, business doesn't pick up again, and another sweet-potato-pie-related incident doesn't help matters. Savvy believes she must find the killer (or killers) to save her business while also fending off an increasingly insistent investor who wants to buy it. With the help of her first husband, a police officer, and her sous-chef, Savvy investigates, finding it difficult to connect the murders and putting her life in danger. Feisty, well-drawn Savvy is a hero for fans of strong Black women protagonists, and the food frame, the lovingly described Chicago setting, and the delicious-sounding recipes will appeal to those who enjoy food-centered cozies. —*Sue O'Brien*

Seesaw Monster.

By Kōtarō Isaka. Tr. by Sam Malissa.

July 2025. 352p. Overlook, $28 (9781419777073); e-book (9798887074191).

In two distinct but connected narratives, Isaka interweaves the trademark everyman assassins and agile wit that readers have loved since *Bullet Train* (2021) with thought-provoking examinations of unresolvable conflict. Tokyo pharmaceutical representative Naoto finds the constant sniping between his wife, Miyako, and his mother maddening. Preoccupied by their strife, Naoto doesn't question his coworker's insistence that Naoto take over a prized hospital account. Too late, Naoto realizes that the hospital is fronting a yakuza fraud scheme, and his honesty makes him a target. Fortunately, his wife and mother each have a hidden past as a spy, and his rescue merits détente. In Isaka's second story, the Great Blackout of 2031 has rendered digital communication unreliable; mail courier Mito is hired to deliver a renowned AI developer's plea to his former partner, Chusonji, to destroy their power-hungry rogue code. As internet-fueled attacks between east and west Tokyo threaten to overwhelm authorities, Mito and Chusonji seek now-elderly Miyako's help. This propulsive genre-bender with fuel for thought is a winner for book clubs. —*Christine Tran*

She Didn't See It Coming.

By Shari Lapena.

July 2025. 352p. Viking/Pamela Dorman, $30 (9780593832448); e-book (9780593832455).

Sam and Bryden Frost seem like the perfect couple—attractive, happily married, with a cute kid, good jobs, an expensive lifestyle, and nice friends. But their pleasant world evaporates when Bryden disappears. Her purse and phone are still in the condo. There are no odd withdrawals from her bank account. She and Sam seemed happy together. Detective Jayne Salter is assigned to the case, and based on past experience, the first person she suspects is the traumatized Sam. But there's no concrete evidence that Sam murdered his wife. According to friends and family, Sam and Bryden were devoted to each other. However, as Jayne digs deeper, she unearths dark and shocking secrets—affairs, betrayals, abuse, drug use, lies, murder for gain, sociopaths, and a dangerous group of internet "amateur sleuths" out for fame and acceptance. Every new discovery makes Bryden's murder more horrifying, but Jayne is determined to solve the case. A twisting, gripping, gruesome read with dark undertones, unrelenting psychological suspense, and a shocking conclusion that will stay with readers long after they've finished the book. —*Emily Melton*

The Silver State.

By Gabriel Urza.

July 2025. 304p. Algonquin, $29 (9781643756677); e-book (9781643756691).

Santi's first day on the job as a newly minted Reno public defender presents a grab bag of crimes from misdemeanors to felonies. He learns the ropes from seasoned attorney C.J., whose jaded, "been there, done that" outlook both calms and concerns him. Santi wants to care about his clients, but C.J. quickly demonstrates that the system doesn't have time for such niceties. When the violently traumatized body of a young mother is discovered several months after her disappearance, and a suspect apprehended, the case falls to Santi and C.J. DNA evidence and a confession deliver a slam-dunk win for the prosecution, despite Santi's and C.J.'s best efforts. Years later, while their client sits on death row, new evidence is presented regarding another missing woman, and the defenders' original theory of the case is shattered. With unassailable honesty and empathy, former public defender and criminal attorney Urza demonstrates that there are no good guys or bad guys, just flawed human beings caught in the morass of a complicated and corruptible legal system. Gripping from the get-go, Urza's legal thriller holds its own against lions of the genre. Riveted readers will want to see a Santi and C.J. series. —*Carol Haggas*

THE
SILVER
STATE
GABRIEL URZA

A Small Disturbance on the Far Horizon.

By Richard Babcock.

July 2025. 228p. Regal, paper, $19.95 (9781646036097); e-book (9781646036103).

Deputies Tom Lang and Ronnie Calvert share much in common. Both are WWII veterans who returned to their small Nevada town and swore to uphold the law. As partners, they spend most of their time hoping to nab speeders on the dusty two-lane highway that cuts through town—a town in steep decline after the mines closed. Most importantly, both men are in love with Ronnie's wife, Ettie. Everything shatters one day in October 1954, when they pull over Adam Ott, a wayward teenager driving across the country in his father's Cadillac. Adam shoots and kills Ronnie, setting off a days-long manhunt in the Nevada mountains. Tom, with a heavy conscience, is determined to bring young Adam to justice. Meanwhile, the townsfolk learn of Ettie and Tom's affair and begin to question the official report of Ronnie's murder. Babcock expertly describes rural small-town life in the 1950s: the claustrophobic puritanism and the values that are foisted upon the residents. The tension builds as Tom closes in on Adam, and Ettie awaits her future —*Bill Kelly*

Sunburned.

By Katherine Wood.

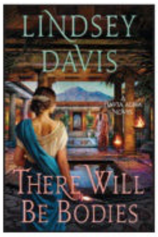
July 2025. 352p. Bantam, $30 (9780593726471); e-book (9780593726488).

Wood follows up her 2024 debut *Ladykiller* with another sizzling summer thriller, this one set in St. Barth's, where single mother Audrey Collet has reluctantly ventured at the insistence of her ex-boyfriend Tyson Dale, now a billionaire leading the way in desalination technology. In the decade since Audrey and Tyson were involved as teens, he's become reclusive and paranoid, and when Audrey arrives in St. Barth's, he shows her a newspaper article someone sent him anonymously about the discovery of the body of one of their old high-school classmates. Both Audrey and Tyson have a connection to the death, and Tyson, fearing someone is trying to blackmail him, strong-arms Audrey into discovering the identity of the blackmailer among the people gathered at his palatial estate, including his indebted business partner, his ex-con brother, and his resentful, much-younger wife. With a bevy of suspects, Audrey tries to uncover the blackmailer while falling for Tyson's handsome, mysterious French valet, Laurent. Wood's captivating sophomore outing is the perfect pick for fans of the TV hit *White Lotus*. —*Kristine Huntley*

★ There Will Be Bodies.

By Lindsey Davis.

July 2025. 368p. Minotaur, $30 (9781250906731); e-book (9781250906748).



This thirteenth title in the Flavia Albia series (after *Death on the Tiber*, 2024) is, simply stated, the best so far. It is AD 90, and Tiberius Manlius, Albia's husband, has been commissioned by his uncle to restore an estate that has been buried in ash since the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius about a decade earlier, and to identify any victims uncovered. Straight away the remains of the previous owner, who appears to have died before the event, are found, along with those of enslaved people who were chained up and left to die. Albia is engaged by a local magistrate to investigate the previous owner's family. She meets with pirates and priestesses and joins forces with several colorful characters from her earlier cases in a relentless pursuit of the truth. As with all her other adventures, this one will leave readers exhausted. The extensive dusty travel by donkey alone is enough, but getting kidnapped and fending off a pickax-wielding maniac most definitely add to the strain. The exhilarating ending makes up for it all. Davis' fans should rejoice in the fact that after graduating Oxford and spending 13 years in the civil service she "ran away to be a writer." —*Jane Murphy*

This House of Burning Bones.

By Stuart MacBride.

July 2025. 400p. Macmillan UK, $27.99 (9781035064854).

The thirteenth Logan McRae mystery (since *All That's Dead*, 2019) begins with the botched apprehension of a murder suspect and a high-octane chase sequence that ends in disaster. Not the Aberdeen police department's finest hour, but let's be fair: half the force is out on sick leave and D.I. McRae is trying to solve a major case—the firebombing of a hotel—with a bunch of cops who aren't what you might call the cream of the crop. The plot is carefully constructed, with a very satisfying payoff, and MacBride's energetic writing style propels readers through the story (the opening chase sequence is downright cinematic). As usual, his characters are delightful, and his dialogue is full of colorful Scottish idioms and made-up curse words ("scrunkfudgers"). And yet, for all this, there is a darkness to the book, an underlying current of fear that keeps us feeling just a little unsettled. He might not be as well known as fellow Scottish crime novelists Ian Rankin or Val McDermid, but Stuart MacBride is in every way as talented a writer. —*David Pitt*

Toil and Trouble.

By Wendy Corsi Staub.

July 2025. 224p. Severn, $29.99 (9781448312467); e-book (9781448312474).

Widow Bella Jordan runs Valley View Manor, a guest house in Lily Dale, in upstate New York, whose claim to fame is that many of the town's residents can speak to the dead. When Bella, who can't speak to spirits, is warned by two residents that she is in grave danger, she shrugs it off. One of her guests turns out to be a former high-school classmate, Jane Anderson, whom Bella barely remembers, but she begins to make Bella feel uncomfortable. Bella's young son, Max, has troubles, too; he misses his best friend, Jiffy, and has a playdate with a new girl in school who has secrets of her own. After Bella hears an intruder in her house, then finds a knife on the kitchen floor, she, with the help of a former cop, investigates Jane with troubling results. Told from both Bella and Max's points of view, this charming cozy, framed by the spirit world, ultimately delivers and solves three mysteries: two in this world, one in the spirit world. —*Sue O'Brien*

★ Too Old for This.

By Samantha Downing.

Aug. 2025. 400p. Berkley, $30 (9780593101032); e-book (9780593101056).

When walker-wielding septuagenarian Lottie Jones pulls up her compression socks and answers her door one day, she gets an awful surprise. Ambitious documentary filmmaker Plum Dixon wants to feature her in an online series telling comeback stories of people falsely accused of crimes. Well, Lottie simply can't allow that. She has changed her name, relocated, and made a new life for herself revolving around her church, and even a hint of past criminal involvement could ruin everything for her. The horrible truth is that although she was exonerated of several murders 40 years ago, she actually did commit them. And her house was paid for by the money she won suing the city of Spokane over her "ordeal." Lottie makes a hasty but seamless dispatch of the unfortunate Plum, but when people come looking for the young woman, the long-retired serial killer finds she must go back to work full-time and try not to kill her somewhat enfeebled self in the process. This is Downing at her best. Delightfully macabre and so artful that the reader might well root for Lottie, even when she is psychotic to the max. The perfect recommendation for someone looking for something different and extremely entertaining. —*Jane Murphy*

TOO OLD FOR THIS
SAMANTHA DOWNING

The Unraveling of Julia.

By Lisa Scottoline.

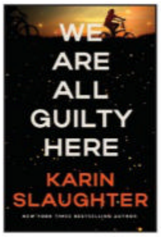
July 2025. 400p. Grand Central, $30 (9781538769997); e-book (9781538770023).

Julia is unmoored after her husband is killed in a mugging. So, when an Italian attorney contacts her regarding the mysterious inheritance of a villa near Florence, it feels like the universe is extending a hand. In Tuscany, Julia finds that her villa is time-worn, but the caretakers welcome her warmly, and she's hopeful that local investigators can discover possible connections between her benefactress and her private adoption as a child. Her Tuscan idyll darkens quickly, though: Julia has horrific ghostly nightmares, is followed by a pair of menacing toughs, and is terrified to find a child's prison cell hidden beneath the villa. When the local carabinieri's response feels like gaslighting, Julia relies on a new friend, handsome librarian Gianluca Moretti, to investigate the mysteries swirling around the villa and her past. Supernatural and gothic elements are light but suspenseful here, enveloped in the warmth of Tuscan food and new beginnings. Scottoline's latest (following *The Truth about the Devlins*, 2024) is evocative of the vintage gothic tales of Phyllis A. Whitney and Victoria Holt. —*Christine Tran*

★ We Are All Guilty Here.

By Karin Slaughter.

Aug. 2025. 448p. Morrow, $32 (9780063336773); e-book (9780063336803).



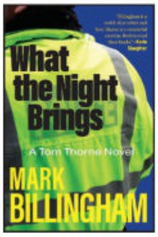
The illusion of small-town perfection in Clifton County, Georgia, was shattered when the tortured bodies of two missing local teens were found. Deputy Emmy Lou Clifton and her father, Sheriff Gerald Clifton, arrested local troublemaker Adam Huntsinger for the murders. But 12 years later, a podcast has uncovered evidence that seems to exonerate him. When another teen disappears, Gerald is killed while protecting

Huntsinger from an angry mob, leaving acting sheriff Emmy Lou at the helm. Is it the true killer, resurrected, or a copycat crime? Emmy Lou sets out to solve the mystery, grudgingly accepting the assistance of famed FBI criminal psychologist Jude Archer (who has her own secrets). Emmy Lou squashes emotional distractions and pivots to dig deep into the original investigation, determined to find the answers in their mistakes. She owes it to her father to bring order back to Clifton County, even if it means exposing lifetimes of rot, from sensitive issues of pedophilia to dangerous secrets. Fans of the Grant County series by Slaughter (*This Is Why We Lied,* 2024), will enjoy the familiar rural Georgia scenery and small-town secrets, but will find something new in instinct-driven Emmy Lou and her messy, fascinating family. *—Christine Tran*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: A new series from best-selling Slaughter will engage new and veteran readers alike.

What the Night Brings.
By Mark Billingham.

July 2025. 432p. Atlantic Monthly, $27 (9780802164582); e-book (9780802164599).



Four dead: done in by poisoned donuts. Sounds like a cozy culinary mystery, but this is actually one of the darkest Tom Thorne mysteries to date, the nineteenth after Billingham's *The Murder Book* (2023). London DI Thorne, who was there when the donuts were being devoured (and almost stole a bite) finds himself in charge of the investigation. The round of arsenic-spiked treats is followed by other deadly attacks on officers who, it turns out, have been abusing their positions by sexually assaulting women trying to report crimes. Thorne and his team are forced to ask how their oath to "prevent all offences against people" has been so egregiously corrupted. Their anger and betrayal, and their determination to uncover the loathsome truth in all of its enormity, are palpable, even as they realize a senior police official must be involved. Incandescent with its brilliant plotting and much needed doses of gallows humor, the story proceeds with considerable speed to a staggering ending that may not be the one readers will be expecting. *—Jane Murphy*

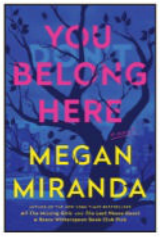
The Whyte Python World Tour.
By Travis Kennedy.

June 2025. 416p. Doubleday, $30 (9780385551335); e-book (9780385551342).

Top Secret! meets *This is Spinal Tap* when drummer Rikki Thunder gets the opportunity of a lifetime—joining Whyte Python, a rising star of 1980s hair metal. Little does the amiable, drug-addled Rikki know that the CIA, the East Germans, and other Eastern Bloc spies are all invested in whether the band's tour blows the roofs off of a divided Berlin. Courted as an agency asset by his smoking-hot girlfriend, Tawny, Rikki is soon drawn into international intrigue and tasked with inspiring revolution through music. (No pressure or anything.) "Whyte Python never dies!"—but if Rikki's rockin' mission fails, the East German secret police may be the ones really killing it on the world stage. Interaction with real-life bands like Aerosmith and Poison, featuring on-page conversations between Rikki and the lead singers, somewhat undermines the high-concept, escapist fun, but GenXers, metalheads, and fans of spy thrillers alike will enjoy this delightfully silly and suspenseful Cold War-era adventure. *—Mala Bhattacharjee*

You Belong Here.
By Megan Miranda.

July 2025. 352p. Marysue Rucci, $28.99 (9781668080979); e-book (9781668080993).



Miranda, best-selling author of a string of thrillers including *All the Missing Girls* (2016) and *The Only Survivors* (2023), delivers another supercharged atmospheric novel here, set on a college campus clinging to a Virginia mountainside. Beckett Bowery, who attended Wyatt College 20 years before, is getting her daughter, Delilah, settled on campus. Beckett didn't want her daughter to attend Wyatt—she is haunted by what happened decades before, when two young men died in a steam tunnel below campus after a fire was set, supposedly by Beckett's roommate and best friend, who disappeared that night. A pall of suspicion that Beckett helped her roommate has hung over her ever since. This thriller's harrowing events center on an unscheduled campus event called "The Howling," where students play a dangerous game of tag through campus and forest. The Howling claimed two lives when Beckett was a student—and now her daughter goes missing. Has she become the target of the town's hatred for her mother? The action shuttles between two decades ago and right now, with Beckett narrating. The question of whether Beckett is an unreliable narrator ratchets up the tension considerably. A terrific read, except for anxious parents of college-bound students. *—Connie Fletcher*

Historical Fiction

American Sky.
By James Grady.

July 2025. 496p. Pegasus, $28.95 (9781639369218); e-book (9781639369225).

In Grady's multilayered bildungsroman, nerdy, bespectacled Luc Ross spends his days hanging out with his middle-school friends, dreaming about his first crush, Buffy, and reading his way through his small Montana town's library. Reading books like *Catch-22*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* has heightened Luc's consciousness, but his innocence is further shattered with the assassination of President Kennedy, upending Luc's previously insulated existence. The narrative follows Luc through his high-school and college years as he experiences his first kiss and first job, while the burgeoning conflict in Vietnam serves as a looming specter of another lost innocence. Grady hauntingly punctuates the text with casualty updates. The prose is taut and gritty, with staccato bursts of snappy dialogue. Grady expertly blends major historical touchstones, such as the space race, Kent State, and the hippie movement, with references to popular music and films of the time, to provide a strong sense of place. The result is a cinematic portrait that brilliantly imbues history with a strong sense of nostalgia. *—Bill Kelly*

Before Dorothy.
By Hazel Gaynor.

June 2025. 368p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593440339); e-book (9780593440346).

Most of us know Emily Gale as the no-nonsense aunt from *The Wizard of Oz*, but who was she as a young woman? Gaynor's Emily is courageous and optimistic, sharing her late mother's dream of living on the Kansas prairie, not afraid of hard work. She marries Henry, who relocates to Kansas to prepare their new home while Emily stays in Chicago until her sister gives birth to a baby girl. Nine years later, Emily brings that young girl to Kansas and tries to learn how to be a mother. Set amid the Dust Bowl, this novel encapsulates the immense joys and heartbreaks of prairie life, where nature's whims hold all the power and good neighbors are a lifeline. The dual time line is accompanied by excerpts from Emily's thoughtful journal. Detailed descriptions capture each of the senses as this novel explores the cost of going after our dreams and what it means to truly be a family. Rife with allusions to the original source material, this is an engaging backstory with depth that will give book clubs much to discuss. *—Maribeth Fisher*

A Bookseller in Madrid.
By Mario Escobar.

July 2025. 352p. Harper Muse, paper, $18.99 (9781400347445).

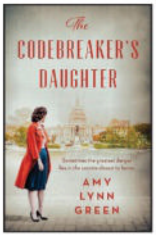
Finding an old book in the trash in present-day New York City frames the story of Barbara, a young woman in early 1930's Berlin whose life's goal is to open a bookshop covering a wide range of ideas. Political events intervene, however, and she moves from the frying pan of Berlin into the fire of Madrid. She reconnects with Juan Delgado, a man she met in Berlin, then opens her shop, marries Juan, and becomes involved in the political upheaval of revolutionary Spain. There is intrigue, danger, and privation as Barbara is forced to spy for the British to earn asylum for her father, and to spy for the Germans to save her family. The ties she maintains to a German Lutheran school that has been active in Spain for generations becomes their lifeline. While told in a somewhat old-fashioned style, the story is dramatic and engaging, and readers willing to suspend their disbelief will appreciate the ending. Escobar's latest (after *The Forgotten Names*, 2024) is a worthy read as present-day occurrences echo events of the past. —*Danise Hoover*

The Codebreaker's Daughter.

By Amy Lynn Green.

June 2025. 400p. Bethany House, paper, $18.99 (9780764242991); e-book (9781493450794).

Lillian Kendall was a successful codebreaker during the Great War, but her spirited daughter Dinah is the one puzzle she's never managed to solve. Dinah may have inherited Lillian's analytical mind, but her mother's cryptic expectations and mysterious past keep the pair perpetually at odds. When Dinah needs Lillian's help completing a cipher assignment during WWII, Lillian must revisit painful secrets about the life she has long kept hidden. With national security at risk and rumors of a spy in their midst, the women race to decipher truths that will impact the war and their relationship forever. Green (*The Foxhole Victory Tour*, 2024) is a beacon of unwavering brilliance in this powerful mother-daughter story about the meaning of legacy in parenthood, personal accomplishment, and patriotism. Her writing brims with charisma as she expertly guides readers into the complex history and politics of cryptanalysis and ciphering during both world wars. The dual-time line narrative candidly highlights the devastating historical stigma and mistreatment of mental illness as well as its generational impact within the Kendall family. From the ethical and cultural impact of propaganda to the quiet turbulence of deciphering love between mothers and daughters, *The Codebreaker's Daughter* is a moving and timely must-read. —*Kate Campos*



Confessions of a Grammar Queen.

By Eliza Knight.

June 2025. 384p. Sourcebooks/Landmark, paper, $17.99 (9781464238239); e-book (9781464238246).

Dog fans and grammar nerds alike will enjoy Knight's latest (after *The Queen's Faithful Companion*, 2024). It's 1963, and Bernadette Swift is a junior copywriter with a real love for the job. However, her boss is the worst kind of misogynist, throwing work, threats, and unwanted advances her way in an attempt to scare her off the job. But Bernadette knows that she'll never be head of a publishing house one day if she lets a man run her out of the office, so she decides to start stirring up a little good trouble, enlisting her friends from book club to join her in a "women in the workplace" march and walkout. But actions have consequences, and Bernadette will face hers with courage and support from her friends and her Great Dane, Frank. A light and lovely tale of women supporting women, with snappy dialogue, a little romance, a little drama, and a whole lot of big words. Perfect for fans of the women of AMC's *Mad Men* or anyone who read and enjoyed Knight's previous works. —*Diana Platt*

Eden's Clock.

By Norman Lock.

July 2025. 304p. Bellevue, paper, $17.99 (9781954276383); e-book (9781954276390).

Young Union soldier Frederick Heigold, rendered mute at Gettysburg after fiery-hot ammunition damaged his vocal cards, is nursed back to health by and eventually marries Lilian, a formidable suffragist, in Lock's final title in his resplendent American Novels series. Decades later, after Lilian stumbles down the stairs and breaks her neck, the widowed Frederick, a respected clocksmith, accepts an invitation to repair a clock tower in San Francisco and sets off on an epic journey from his home in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Frederick communicates by writing on slates; as Lock expertly delves into his inner world, he also poignantly explores the nature of human connection. Lock employs a variety of narrative devices, inserting news stories, snippets of overheard conversations, and historical anecdotes that add verisimilitude to the narrative. Frederick's adventure includes a stint in the Manhattan jail known as "the Tombs," a shipwreck, and an arduous train ride across the country before meeting Jack London just prior to the 1906 earthquake. Rich in period detail and memorable characters, this is a fitting conclusion to the series. —*Bill Kelly*

The Famine Orphans.

By Patricia Falvey.

June 2025. 368p. Kensington, paper, $18.95 (9781496748133); e-book (9781496748140).

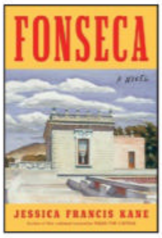
Falvey's latest historical fiction (after 2021's engaging *The Titanic Sisters*) follows young Irish orphan, Kate Gilvarry, as she's driven away from her homeland to forge a new life in mid-1800s Australia. After the Great Famine tears Kate's family apart, she finds little option beyond the despair of Ireland's workhouses, leading the 16-year-old to embark for Sydney as part of a government emigration program for female Irish orphans. During the treacherous months-long voyage with a colorful cast of fellow travellers, Kate befriends the ship's sensitive doctor, Nathaniel. But their burgeoning connection abruptly ends upon Kate's arrival, where she is indentured as a domestic servant. Here Kate meets gardener Luke, and when he asks for her hand, Kate accepts, knowing it is a chance at independence. The couple set off for the Outback, where Kate is forced to protect herself—and her future—amidst the dangers of the landscape and nefarious characters, all while struggling to reconcile the life she has left behind. Falvey's historical eye and dynamic characters elevate Kate's emotionally gripping journey of loss, fortitude, and survival. —*Leah Strauss*

Fonseca.

By Jessica Francis Kane.

Aug. 2025. 272p. Penguin, $28 (9780593298855); e-book (9780593298862).

Whenever a famous author disappears for a time, it becomes the stuff of legend. Through a diaphanous use of magical realism in a remote Mexican landscape, Kane (*Rules for Visiting*, 2019) authentically reimagines a creatively and personally unsettled period in the life of beloved British author Penelope Fitzgerald. It's 1952, and Penelope flees England, where, with her alcoholic husband, she serves as co-editor of a struggling literary magazine. Newly pregnant with their third child, Penelope leaves their three-year-old daughter with relatives and travels with their six-year-old son to the town of Fonseca, Mexico, on the slimmest of whims. She's received a letter from two elderly women she barely knows, but their summons to visit holds a shimmering promise of a monetary legacy that would give the Fitzgeralds the means to continue their work and save their marriage. But Penelope is not alone in this quest for bequeathed wealth; a cast of zany fellow fortune seekers provides stealthy competition, dubious friendship, and unbidden romance. Challenged by conflicting desires for independence and recognition, family stability and expanded horizons, passionate love and domestic tranquility, Penelope is a woman unmoored. A self-proclaimed Fitzgerald fan, Kane pays eloquent, empathetic homage to her literary hero. —*Carol Haggas*



The Great Mann.

By Kyra Davis Lurie.

June 2025. 320p. Crown, $28 (9780593800867); e-book (9780593800867).

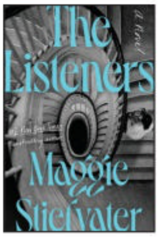
Painfully realizing a warm welcome did not exist for him in Virginia after the end of WWII, young veteran Charlie accepted his cousin Margie's invitation to come to California. Margie had told Charlie life was very different in Los Angeles for African Americans, but nothing prepared him for Margie's high-end community known as Sugar Hill, complete with wealthy men and women who looked like him. In 1945, racial tensions are high in Sugar Hill, while an enigmatic man known as Reaper throws opulent parties for Hollywood stars and the Black elite. For her historical fiction debut, Davis Lurie drew inspiration from a scene in *The Great Gatsby* depicting the novelty of wealthy African Americans, wanting to tell a story about this very real yet often overlooked past. Closely paralleling F. Scott Fitzgerald's original novel, her retelling adds profound depth through social commentary with its portrayal of an affluent, Black L.A. community along with the glitz and glamour of old Hollywood. —*Kristen Shaw*

The Listeners.

By Maggie Stiefvater.

June 2025. 400p. Viking, $30 (9780593655504); e-book (9780593655511).

June "Hoss" Hudson, general manager of the Avalon in West Virginia, listens to the water that runs through the springs under the hotel. A mentorship with the late owner gave her a deep understanding of the notion of luxury, and she and her staff keep obsessive tabs on their guests' needs. That doesn't change when, in 1942, the State Department commandeers the hotel for Axis diplomats and their families—the guests may be different, but the Avalon has a reputation to uphold. Special Agent Tucker Minnick listens in on phone calls at the hotel. He has ties to the region, but he is a Bureau man and won't let a painful past get in the way of him doing his job. The last listener is Hannelore Wolfe, the daughter of the German cultural attaché, who is nonverbal except for the songs her father teaches her. YA fantasy author Stiefvater's first novel for adults is centered around a supremely competent woman at the mercy of the waters and the tides of history. Though events rarely leave the hotel grounds, the book feels epic, and the characters and storylines bob and weave until the stunning conclusion. Highly recommended for fans of engrossing WWII-set fiction. —*Susan Maguire*



HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Stiefvater is the latest big-name YA author to venture into the adult space, and her historical-fiction novel with a hint of homespun fantasy is a rousing success.

The Night Sparrow.

By Shelly Sanders.

July 2025. 368p. Harper, paper, $18.99 (9780063319219); e-book (9780063319226).

Once a thriving university student studying German, Elena Bruskina now finds her world crashing down as the Nazis rise to power and invade the Soviet Union. After losing her entire family and countless friends, Elena is determined to avenge them and escapes the Minsk ghetto to join the resistance. She learns of a new sniper training school for women in Moscow and is drawn to the cause. There she soon learns the fine line between justice and revenge. Deployed to the front, Elena and her comrades face the horrors of war, witnessing the evil deeds of the Nazis, while also coming to terms with the atrocities inflicted by their own people. Upon being injured, Elena finds herself working as an interpreter chasing down the epitome of evil, Hitler himself. Told in multiple time lines in alternating chapters, Sanders compiles the untold true stories of Soviet women into a heartbreaking and compelling narrative. This book does not shy away from the barbarity of war, and readers should be advised that this is not a cozy historical fiction novel. —*Patricia Smith*

The Palace at the End of the Sea.

By Simon Tolkien.

June 2025. 444p. Amazon/Lake Union, $28.99 (9781662528620); paper, $16.99 (9781662528644); e-book (9781662528637).

Theo Sterling is 11 in 1929 New York City, disconnected from his mother, who fled to America alone after her parents were killed by Communists in Mexico and now clings to her Catholic religion, and his father, whose parents sat shiva after he married outside the faith and who now only has faith in capitalistic power. They are equally disconnected from Theo and each other. With no roots to ground him, Theo drifts through a succession of role models from New York tenements to an English boarding school to Andalusia, Spain. He knows he wants to defend the vulnerable but struggles to find the right ideology, often getting in over his head when it comes to class wars. This coming-of-age tale is the first of a duology, establishing Theo's foundation up to the start of the Spanish Civil War. Detailed descriptions provide a strong sense of place and of Theo's maturing self-awareness and determination. Readers will be eager to see whether he's ready for the fight that is to come in the next installment. —*Maribeth Fisher*

A Promise to Arlette.

By Serena Burdick.

June 2025. 320p. Atria, $28.99 (9781668070307); e-book (9781668070321).

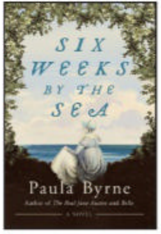
Raised in rural England to expect a life of hard work and thwarted dreams, Ida doesn't see an escape until the summer day in 1938 when she meets and befriends charismatic Arlette, a photographer who opens her eyes to the wider world. Ida follows Arlette to France, but this adventure soon turns deadly when the Nazis invade and Arlette joins the Resistance. Stranded in France, Ida tries to avoid danger—until an American soldier, Sidney, shows up at her home, in need of a hiding place. Drawn together by fear and loneliness, they inevitably fall in love—but love in war means hard choices, and Ida is forced to make a decision that has tragic consequences for Arlette. Years later, Ida and Sidney have survived and built a happy life together in America . . . until the day that, improbably, one of Arlette's photographs re-emerges and forces Ida to confront the shame and guilt that comes with survival. Burdick (*Find Me in Havana*, 2021) sensitively explores the evolution of complex relationships forged during extraordinary times in a way that may appeal to fans of Jennifer Ryan. —*Mel Bruecks*

Six Weeks by the Sea.

By Paula Byrne.

Aug. 2025. 256p. Pegasus, $28.95 (9781639369256); e-book (9781639369263).

The Austen sisters, Jane and Cassandra, are disheartened by their parents' unexpected announcement that they are vacating the Steventon rectory in favor of allowing their son James and his wife to take over the living. Needing six weeks before taking up residence in Bath, the sisters and their parents select the seaside resort of Sidmouth in part so Jane can benefit from the curative properties of sea bathing and restore her good health. The family quickly finds themselves involved in local society gatherings, becoming acquainted with new friends, and supporting causes they believe in with action-oriented solutions. Will six weeks be long enough to help make lasting changes for those they care about? For longtime fans or those with knowledge of the Austen family, there are hints acknowledging actual family dynamics and events, but background knowledge is not required to appreciate Byrne's first foray into historical fiction. Offering deeper insights into relationships, including Jane's much-speculated-on romantic connections, amid quiet moments of domestic life, *Six Weeks by the Sea* is an appropriately Austen-esque novel of manners. Addressing serious social issues as seen through period-appropriate perspectives may provide modern readers new understanding of Jane Austen and her world. —*Stacey Hayman*



These Blue Mountains.

By Sarah Loudin Thomas.

July 2025. 352p. Bethany House, paper, $18.99 (9780764242021); e-book (9781493450909).

Fourteen years after her fiancé Fritz disappeared and was presumed dead, German pianist Hedda Schlagel travels to the U.S. to the former POW camp in North Carolina where he was last held, seeking closure. Hedda's arrival rattles deputy Garland Jones, who knows more than he admits about Fritz's disappearance. When the wrong body is exhumed from Fritz's grave, suspicions ignite. In the search for answers, Hedda finds more than she expected: purpose, freedom amid rising Nazi rule, and a certain handsome deputy willing to fight for her love. But with her visa expiring soon and a shocking revelation, one final choice may break her heart forever. Sarah Loudin Thomas (*These Tangled Threads*, 2024) beautifully blends the fragility of hope and the reality of fear in this complex yet deeply resonant story about the freeing power of truth. Set in the 1930s Blue Ridge Mountains, the novel confronts how past choices impact the present, and the consequences of ignorance and denial. It highlights the nuanced German American immigrant experience, explores art through painting and piano, and gracefully weaves in themes of personal growth and faith. —*Kate Campos*

Typewriter Beach.

By Meg Waite Clayton.

July 2025. 320p. Harper, $30 (9780063422148).

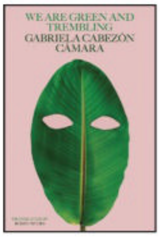
Best-seller Clayton's (*The Postmistress of Paris*, 2021) ninth novel is the captivating story of a complicated friendship between an aspiring actress and a blacklisted screenwriter, steeped in the glamour and dark undertones of post-war Hollywood. Scandal threatens Iz's hopes of becoming Hitchcock's next leading lady when the studio's fixer whisks her off to a remote cottage in Carmel to lie low until her appointment at an out-of-the-way motel. Her choices now could crush her ambitions. Next door, German-born Leo's typewriter "clack[s] and ding[s]" into the night on scripts he's forced to sell uncredited. His silence shields a traumatic past. Forward to 2018, when Leo's granddaughter returns to Carmel to scatter his ashes and sell his cottage. Family secrets unravel when Gemma meets Iz and finds a puzzling screenplay and a hidden roll of unprocessed film. Parallel narratives sustain the mystery in Clayton's beautifully written, emotionally and morally layered story of family formed in "love rather than blood" and love transformed into art by "eight fingers on eight keys." Cultural dilemmas from the 1950s continue to resonate. *—Anne Foley*

★ We Are Green and Trembling.

By Gabriela Cabezón Cámara. Tr. by Robin Meyers.

June 2025. 256p. New Directions, paper, $17.95 (9780811238618); e-book (9780811238625).

Famed Argentinian writer Cabezón Cámara's third novel published in English, fluidly translated by Myers, is a polyphonic interpretation of the incomparable adventures of an enigmatic, seventeenth-century conquistador-esque figure whose chosen moniker was Antonio de Erauso. Born Catalina de Erauso in Spain, he escaped as a teen from the convent, took various masculine names while working as "a cabin boy, shopkeeper, and soldier," among numerous other incarnations, and spent most of his adulthood in the New World. Here, Antonio has unintentionally gathered a "tribe"—two rescued young Indigenous girls, two monkeys, a dog, a horse, and her colt—and is on the run from the captain he's betrayed. While struggling to stay alive, he writes his "beloved aunt" an autobiographical letter detailing his exploits. Conversations with his young charges about God, Christ, Satan, angels, sin, and hell interrupt his epistolary "tall tales." Intertwined through Antonio's explications are glimpses of a dying bishop and the left-behind captain. Cabezón Cámara's acknowledgments include nods to the Guaraní people's *Ayvu Rapyta* origin stories, Catalina de Erauso's (alleged) autobiography, and even Hayao Miyazaki. From these seemingly disparate inspirations, Cabezón Cámara creates a seamless, fever-dreamy exposé of inhumane colonialism, religiosity, and genocide while revealing the extreme resilience necessary to claim selfhood outside expected, mandated norms. *—Terry Hong*



Romance

All the Men I've Loved Again.

By Christine Pride.

July 2025. 320p. Atria, $28.99 (9781668049532); e-book (9781668049556).

Pride showed a gift for vivid character building in the novels *We Are Not Like Them* (2021) and *You Were Always Mine* (2023), both coauthored by Jo Piazza. Her first solo endeavor introduces dear protagonist Cora, who starts college at the dawn of the new millennium. She and her single dad, a teacher, were always an unstoppable, bookish duo, but Cora arrived at adulthood with no dating experience. That quickly changes when Cora meets Lincoln, her true sweetheart, who has drive and sees a future for them. Cora's girlfriends support her through the woes of a young romance, but heartache ensues, as does a connection with a dreamy artist penpal, Aaron. The book jumps ahead to the 2020s, with Cora again faced with these same suitors from her formative years. What have the decades taught Cora about partnership? What decisions do we make at 20 that affect the course of the rest of our lives? Pride's novel also seems to say there is no better time to learn how to love than in early adulthood. *—Courtney Eathorne*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Pride and Piazza's novels made big waves and lots of best-of lists; readers will be amped to see Pride's first solo-authored novel.

The Friendship Fling.

By Georgia Stone.

June 2025. 384p. HarperPerennial, paper, $17.99 (9780063434790); e-book (9780063434813).

In this sharp-witted gender reversal of the grumpy/sunshine trope, Ava is a super-experienced barista who's decided that cutting herself off from any real relationship is the only way to survive. Enter Finn, an overly cheerful people-pleaser who's only in town for a few months and is looking to complete a bucket list during his visit. Determined to keep their relationship strictly in the friend-zone, the two quickly find that they can't ignore their chemistry as they take in the sights of London and develop their friendship into something stronger than they initially expected. But as the time of Finn's departure approaches, Ava finds she simply isn't ready for what could be if she dared to get closer to Finn. Stone's novel comes out of the gate with snappy dialogue, incredible banter, and characters that feel both real and relatable in many ways. Fans of Ali Hazelwood, friends-to-lovers, and slow burn romances will adore both of the main characters and be immediately drawn into the story of their growing friendship. *—Lindsey Allen*

From the Valley We Rise.

By Elizabeth Musser.

June 2025. 400p. Bethany House, paper, $18.99 (9780764243493); e-book (9781493450855).

Musser (*By Way of the Moonlight*, 2022) highlights the courage of the Maquis, young men and women from the French countryside who used guerilla tactics to help end the Nazi occupation during WWII. Isabelle Seauve is hiding from a Nazi officer who now knows where she lives. Meanwhile, her cousin, René Amblard, flees his family farm with "Delphine," a Jewish teenager hidden there after the Nazis murdered his mother and two of his brothers in a targeted attack. They head toward Isabelle's apartment in Sisteron. Can they protect the children hiding with families in Sisteron and survive the Nazi occupation? A camp founded by a missionary before the war could hold the key. This book shows the power of faith in God's foresight and ability to restore even in the worst circumstances. The story is also a testament to those who perished and the survivors of the accidental bombing of Sisteron in 1944. This book is compelling, with realistic characters and emotions. It will appeal to readers who enjoy Kristy Cambron's and Lynn Austin's WWII novels and the novels of Brock and Bodie Thoene. *—Cynthia Hammell*

★ The Good Boy.

By Stella Hayward.

July 2025. 320p. Avon, paper, $18.99 (9780063416888); e-book (9780063416895).

At Genie's thirtieth birthday dinner with her family, her grandmother gives her a wish. She tells her about a magical ancestral ability in the female line to give a wish, once every 10 years, to a loved one. Genie is skeptical, and as her family nudges her about her romantic prospects, quickly forgets about it. Later at home, cuddling with her beloved golden retriever, she muses about how unnecessary it is for her family to be worried about her being lonely. She tells Rory she wishes he was human, because she isn't lonely—she has him. In the morning she is shocked to find a naked man in Rory's dog bed. The very good-looking man claims he is her dog, and acts exactly how Rory the dog would act. This delightful romp puts Genie together with her oldest friend, Miles, the boy next door, as they try to find out how to turn Rory back into the dog he loved being. Rory, even as a man, is a good dog, loyal, always ready to play, and loving treats. Laugh-out-loud comedic moments and a true appreciation of the wonderfulness of dogs are the perfect backdrop for an unexpected romance between friends. *—Diana Tixier Herald*

THE GOOD BOY
A NOVEL
STELLA HAYWARD

How Freaking Romantic.

By Emily Harding.

July 2025. 352p. Gallery, paper, $18.99 (9781668082744); e-book (9781668082751).

NYU law student Beatrice has had it with her best friend's divorce lawyer. It's bad enough that two of her college friends are getting divorced, but when Josh's lawyer is pushing for alimony from Jill, she goes to give attorney Nathan a piece of her mind. It’s satisfying until she runs into him at a professional function alongside her mentor, who brought her in hopes that she could line up a job for post-graduation. Their verbal sparring turns into a searing good night kiss—and then Nathan subs in as a professor for a class where she is TA, forcing them into close proximity. They might work together now, but they’re still on opposite legal sides of a divorce—even so, sparks begin to fly. Beatrice is shy of relationships thanks to her serial-marrying mother, and while she finds herself falling for Nathan, she starts to realize she doesn’t know the entire story about Jill and Josh after all. The humorous chemistry and enemies-to-lovers trope between Beatrice and Nathan make the story a fun read from a promising author. —*Amy Alessio*

Of Silver and Secrets.

By Michelle Griep.

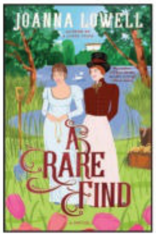
June 2025. 368p. Bethany House, $18.99 (9780764242571); e-book (9781493450817).

Eva Inman was a child in Royston, England, when her close friend Bram Webb suddenly left, and she never heard from him again. Later, in 1889, Eva is trying to keep her home and support her brilliant 12-year-old sister, Penny, who is blind. While cultivating her property, a farmhand finds a silver ring with a fish symbol, possibly of Roman origin. Eva brings it to Cambridge University to find its worth. Surprisingly, her old friend Bram is now a history and archaeology professor there. To save their careers, Bram and his forgetful uncle must find the Roman Christian settlement, Caelum Academia, a center of faith, learning, and the arts, which Bram’s uncle believes existed around Royston. Could the ring be a clue? Can Eva and Bram trust in God’s forgiveness and provision? The second in the Time’s Lost Treasures series (after *Of Gold and Shadows*, 2024) has a compelling story and characters to root for as they overcome villainous plots through faith. Griep’s novel will appeal to readers who enjoy intriguing tales set in the Victorian era. —*Cynthia Hammell*

A Rare Find.

By Joanna Lowell.

June 2025. 368p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593549742); e-book (9780593549759).



Elfreda “Elf” Marsden doesn’t care what anyone else says: she is an archaeologist. The Alban Society of Antiquaries, however, does not accept the idea of welcoming female members. Elf thinks she may have finally found what she needs to establish her professional bona fides with the antiquarians, however, when she uncovers a Viking amulet near her home in Derbyshire. Unfortunately, the artifact is quickly lost when Elf bumps into her childhood frenemy, Georgina “Georgie” Redmayne. Hoping to mend fences with Elf, Georgie offers to help her search for the Viking treasure rumored to be buried somewhere in the neighborhood. But can Elf really work with Georgie when she proves to be so distracting in so many different ways? Lowell (*A Shore Thing*, 2024) switches things up with the Regency-era setting of her latest impeccably written, dryly witty historical romance, but readers will be delighted to know that the nuanced characters, as well as the thoughtful exploration of the fluidity of gender identity and transformative power of love, are everything they have come to expect from this extraordinary author. —*John Charles*

Sounds like Love.

By Ashley Poston.

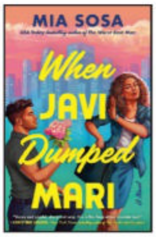
June 2025. 384p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593641002); e-book (9780593641019).

On the eve of her annual vacation back home and to the Revelry, the music venue on the Outer Banks that has been in her family for a few generations, hit songwriter Joni Lark must attend a concert. There, she is manipulated into kissing Sebastian Fell, former boy-band member and son of a multiplatinum recording artist. She hurries home, but even being back doesn’t help Joni’s writer’s block, as she deals with the long goodbye of Alzheimer’s stealing her mother away. And a voice, as well as a particular melody, is stuck in her head. It continues to haunt her, until she discovers the person whose voice she is hearing is hearing the same melody fragment. Perhaps the only way to get out of each other’s mind is to complete the song. Poston (*The Seven Year Slip*, 2023) is comfortingly adept at creating complex characters who are kind, and surrounding them with realistic friends and family, while making the world of music writing, a small coastal town, and its music venue feel real. —*Diana Tixier Herald*

When Javi Dumped Mari.

By Mia Sosa.

June 2025. 352p. Putnam, paper, $19 (9798217044306); e-book (9798217044313).



What is she thinking? That is what Javier Baez wants to know when his best friend Marisol Campos announces she is getting married. When they first met more than a decade ago in college, Javi and Mari made a pact that neither one of them would date someone the other didn’t preapprove. So, why is Javi just now finding out about Mari’s new fiancé? For most of the time they have known each other, Javi and Mari have been firmly stuck in the friend zone. But what if this is the opportunity Javi needs to finally tell Mari that he is ready for them to be something more than just friends? With plenty of passion and considerable panache, Sosa (*The Wedding Crasher*, 2022) returns with a brilliantly fashioned friends-to-lovers romance that not only delivers plenty of red-hot sexual chemistry, vibrantly etched characters, and deliciously snappy wit but also joyously celebrates family, friendship, and Latinx culture. —*John Charles*

Winging It with You.

By Chip Pons.

June 2025. 384p. Putnam, paper, $19 (9780593853504); e-book (9780593853511).

After Asher Bennett and his boyfriend, Clint Hanson, are selected to compete in *The Epic Trek*, Asher begins planning for any contingency their team might encounter while racing around the globe. The one thing Asher didn’t plan for is having Clint dump him at the check-in counter at the Boston airport. Asher is just about to jettison his plans to participate in the reality-TV show when a replacement travel partner suddenly emerges. Forced into taking some long-overdue vacation time and hoping to prove to his family and friends that he can be spontaneous, pilot Theo Fernandez offers to be Asher’s new teammate. There is just one catch: In order to compete with Asher, Theo must also pretend to be his new boyfriend. Romance readers will be flying high with Pons’ delightfully entertaining debut rom-com, in which the author successfully marries an *Amazing Race*–inspired plot with plenty of steamy sexual chemistry and lively writing brilliantly buoyed up by a refreshingly sharp sense of humor. —*John Charles*

Worth Fighting For.

By Jesse Q. Sutanto.

June 2025. 288p. Hyperion Avenue, $26.99 (9781368112802); paper (9781368112819); e-book (9781368114813).

Sutanto is the fifth best-selling author to join Disney’s Meant to Be collection, featuring contemporary rom-com adaptations of Disney princess stories. “I can still remember how pivotal *Mulan* was for me and my friends,” Sutanto acknowledges. “To see her as a Disney princess on the big screen was—and I am not exaggerating here—life-changing.” Her Mulan is a partner-to-be at her father’s San Francisco private equity firm, but she’s absolutely *not* a nepo hire. Although acquiring a family-run whiskey company, with its hypermasculine messaging, isn’t exactly her priority, when her sexagenarian father has a heart attack, Mulan promises to do anything to reduce his stress, even if it means pretending she’s someone else. She’s always worn multiple masks: finance bro, supportive supervisor, brilliant analyst. Adding one more should be all in a (successful) day’s work, right? Sutanto’s chatty ease instantly engages readers, while (again) seamlessly inserting pokes and prods at sexism, generational divides, and familial and cultural clashes as she celebrates girl power, clever aunties, and even her latest series’ protagonist Vera Wong’s tea! —*Terry Hong*

Adult

Spotlight on **SF/Fantasy & Horror**

Art from *Lucky Day,* by Chuck Tingle.

Acts of God.

By Kanan Gill.

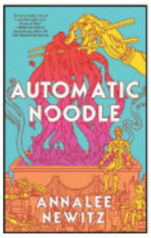
Aug. 2025. 381p. Blackstone, $28.99 (9798874830946).

Dr. Krishna, the world's only Genius Category 3, has fallen from dizzying heights and is now working on a minor project under the supervision of a mere Genius Category A (the lowest category; still a genius). Secretly, he's obsessed with continuing his forbidden research into universe simulations—each one ends at the same point in the distant past, sometime in the twenty-first century. P. Manjunath, a chaotic and only occasionally competent detective, is always entangled in the end of Dr. Krishna's simulations. In the current one, he and his assistant Heng are about to go to Copenhagen. Manjunath has a feeling that something is about to happen there, and as it turns out, he's right. Dr. Krishna, meanwhile, is going to rather desperate lengths to nudge the simulation (despite Manjunath's unwitting interference) in the direction he wants it to go. Comedian Gill's debut is an entertaining ride, with an amusingly chatty narrator and plenty of clever nods to the nature of reality, packaged in a combination of comedic detective story and high-action plot. —*Regina Schroeder*

★ Automatic Noodle.

By Annalee Newitz.

Aug. 2025. 176p. Tor.com, $21.99 (9781250357465); e-book (9781250357472).



When Staybehind and his fellow robots wake up after a mysterious shutdown, they find the restaurant is flooding. And worse, the owners of their shop are on the lam after running a crypto scam. But after conferring, the assorted robots, living in a postwar San Francisco in a future where California is liberated from the U.S. and robots have a first wave of basic civil rights, decide that if humans can run a restaurant, so can they. In a daring move, they reopen as Authentic Noodle, a shop that serves biang biang–style noodles. But when a robophobic group begins to flood their site with one-star reviews, they'll have to fight to remain open. This sweet, heart- (and stomach) warming novella is a certified cozy read, rich with meaning for queer readers, enjoyably familiar to San Francisco lovers. Perfect for fans both of Becky Chambers' Monk & Robot series and Travis Baldree's *Legends & Lattes* (2022), this book is silly and poignant in turns, shifting from an octopuslike robot's first hand-pulling attempts to an ex-military bot's difficult past memories. Newitz (*The Terraformers,* 2023) has gifted sf readers with a hopeful, postapocalyptic found-family tale. —*Leah von Essen*

The Birth of a Dynasty.

By Chinaza Bado.

July 2025. 384p. Harper Voyager, $30 (9780063397606); e-book (9780063397613).

On the island of Ahkebulin there are nine kingdoms, each represented by a different animal. The kingdoms were always at odds with one another until Aksum Zenzele conquered and unified them and started the Zenzele Dynasty. The remaining eight kingdoms were turned into noble houses. But the reign of Zenzele's descendants is haunted by a prophecy that members of the Mukundi and Nnamani families will fall in love and bring about the end of the Zenzele family's control. So, the Zenzeles have made a law that prevents intermarriage between houses. When a Mukundi and Nnamani do fall in love, a prince of the Zenzeles attempts to kill all of the Mukundi family to end their love but also to eliminate any chance of the prophecy coming true. However, one member of the Mukundi family survives and manages to remain hidden for a bit. His counterpart in the Nnamani family is put in the palace in an attempt to control the prophecy. Bado's series opener is full of rich storytelling that fans of epic and political fantasy will completely enjoy. —*Emily Whitmore*

The Bone Raiders.

By Jackson Ford.

Aug. 2025. 464p. Orbit, paper, $19.99 (9780316577694); e-book (9780316577717).

Bone raider Sayana is scouting out a village to loot when she is discovered. She's tied up to a post, about to be cruelly dispatched when an araatan, a giant, alligatorlike creature that breathes fire, shows its ugly face. In desperation, Sayana manages to get loose and finds herself seated on the neck of the monster. Not only do her fellow raiders (five of them) show up but so does a battalion of the Khan's troops, who were there to make sure the villagers were following the royal decree to abandon their homes and migrate to Karkarum. Sayana discovers that by grabbing the stubby protuberances on the araatan's head, she can steer the creature. By harnessing the ferocious beast, the bone raiders could become defenders of the villages of the Tapestry rather than predators. It doesn't turn out to be easy, with loss and betrayals before the end. Ford (*A Sh*tload of Crazy Powers*, 2022) begins this new series with quirky characters, loads of great action sequences, and his trademark brand of humor. —*Don Vicha*

Cosmic Love at the Multiverse Hair Salon.

By Annie Mare.

June 2025. 384p. Ace, paper, $24.95 (9780593817483); e-book (9780593817490).

Recovering from heartbreak, hair stylist Tressa Fay hasn't dated in months, but the engineer on the other end of a wrong-number text, Meryl, catches her attention—Tressa Fay can't resist a smart girl. A few days later, Meryl's sister and best friend show up at Tressa Fay's salon demanding to know why she sent a message to Meryl a month after she mysteriously vanished; they realize that Meryl's texts somehow reached Tressa Fay several months into Meryl's future. As their friends and families come together, experiments with tweaking the past to prevent Meryl's disappearance lead to changes in the present and glimpses of other realities. While the Tressa Fay of the past meets Meryl in spring, and present-day Tressa Fay continues to fall for her over texts in autumn, both versions of her wonder whether she can hold on to Meryl tightly enough to prevent her from slipping through the cracks between universes. This gently mind-bending read featuring a touching sapphic romance across time and universes is perfect for fans of Casey McQuiston's *One Last Stop* (2021). —*Elena Gleason*

Departure 37.

By Scott Carson.

Aug. 2025. 400p. Atria/Emily Bestler, $28.99 (9781982191481).

Michael Koryta's fourth novel published under the Carson pseudonym (since *Where They Wait,* 2021) might also be the best (so far). Across the U.S., commercial airline pilots receive urgent telephone calls telling them that if they fly their next scheduled flight, they (and their passengers) will die. Strangely, the phone calls come from the pilots' mothers—but there's something even more curious: some of the mothers deny making those calls, and others couldn't have. What's the apparent connection to 60-year-old research into shielding aircraft from the effects of nuclear radiation? The author stretches plausibility about as far as you can without snapping it into pieces, but he never loses the reader—by the time readers understand just how far Carson intends to push the story, they will be deeply invested. The craftsmanship is exemplary, too: vividly drawn characters, tension that keeps ratcheting up until it's almost unbearable, and a smart way of dispensing information that keeps readers from getting too comfortable with their notions of where the story is going. Wildly imaginative and genuinely, nailbitingly suspenseful. —*David Pitt*

Continued on p.47

DEADLY DRAMA & MAGICAL MAYHEM

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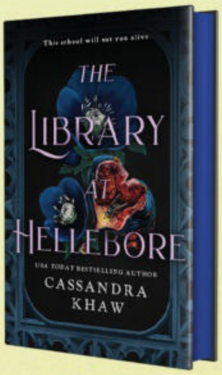

"This is the punk rock, eldritch god, carnage-fueled battle royale dark academia that makes partial decapitation look like an amateur sandbox."

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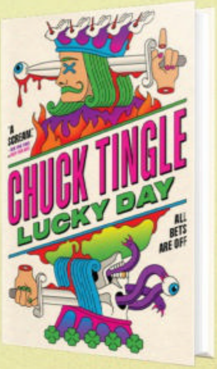

The newest novel of terror from Chuck Tingle where one woman must go up against horrifying odds to save the world.

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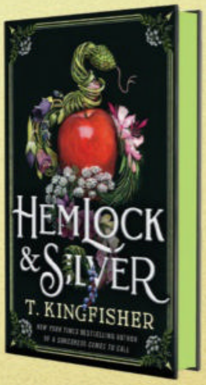

"Masterful storytelling with an unforgettable heroine, creepy magic, and a fantastic cat! I almost wish I hadn't read it so I could read it again for the first time!"

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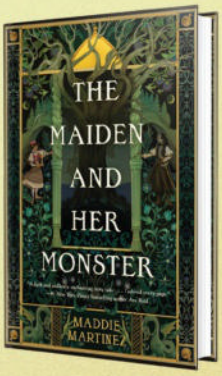

"A dark and endlessly enchanting fairy tale... the kind that is whispered by candlelight and brushes up against history itself. I adored every page."

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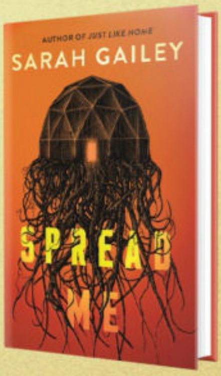

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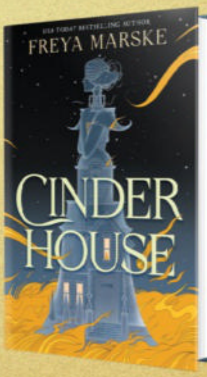

Sparks fly and lovers dance in this gorgeous, yearning Cinderella retelling—a queer Gothic romance perfect for fans of Naomi Novik and T. Kingfisher.

10.7.25
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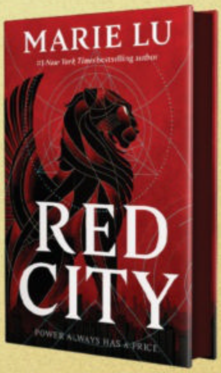

The Godfather meets *The Magicians* in this dark and deadly contemporary fantasy of magical warfare, star-crossed ambition, and the pursuit of perfection at any cost.

10.14.25
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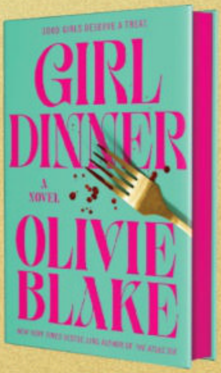

"One of the most unique voices writing at the moment. I live for her commentary on motherhood, relationships, and above all, academia."

—ALI HAZELWOOD

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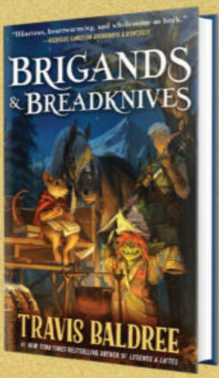


Return to the cozy fantasy world of the #1 *NYT* bestselling Legends & Lattes series with a new adventure featuring fan-favorite, foul-mouthed bookseller Fern

11.11.25
9781250334886

Art from *A Little Hatred*, by Joe Abercrombie.

Booklist Essentials

Fantasy Anti-Heroes

by Susan Maguire

Reading about upright characters full of moral fortitude and clear ethical boundaries can be exhausting. Who wants all that good-guy stuff, when learning about the less-than-good-guy is so much more interesting? At least that's the case with these fantasy novels that feature heroes (regardless of gender) who are slightly less than heroic. Instead, they're morally complex (or "morally gray" in the parlance of romance and romantasy), conflicted, often infuriating—and oh-so-fun to read.

A Darker Shade of Magic. By V. E. Schwab. 2015. Tor, $25.99 (9780765376459).

In this ingeniously clever tale, a gifted young man has a respectable job carrying correspondence between the rulers of three parallel Londons—one rich in magic, one fighting to control magic, and one where magic no longer exists—with a sideline in smuggling artifacts between cities. When a deal goes wrong, he goes on the run with a clever thief, and the two must save themselves—and the parallel worlds.

Five Broken Blades. By Mai Corland. 2024. Entangled/Red Tower, $32.99 (9781649376909).

Five anti-heroes for the price of one! An assassin, a thief, a hired ruffian, an exiled prince, and a spoiled nobleman's son must work together to assassinate an immortal king in this epic romantasy inspired by Korean myth, full of page-turning action.

A Little Hatred. By Joe Abercrombie. 2019. Orbit, $27 (9780316187169).

In an unflinching trilogy starter shot through with moments of humor, excitement, and hope, a host of morally ambiguous characters—a young warrior, a ruthless socialite, and a dissolute heir, for starters—fight for their lives in a brutal world featuring industrialized cities full of dissatisfied workers and a fomenting rebellion.

Mistborn: The Final Empire. By Brandon Sanderson. 2006. Tor, $21.99 (9781250868282).

The book that kicked off Sanderson's legendary, long-running series centers a group of thieves that rebels against the ruling religious order. Kelsior has the powers of the Mistborn. While planning his most daring raid yet, he encounters another Mistborn, who may be able to help his crew. Intrigue, politics, conspiracies, and characters with conflicting moral codes mesh in this deeply satisfying fantasy.

The Poppy War. By R. F. Kuang. 2018. Harper/Voyager, $26.99 (9780062662569).

An adopted war orphan of unknown heritage gains admittance to the Empire's premier military institute, where she chooses to study with an eccentric old man many believe to be a crazy, drug-addicted war criminal, but who encourages her to explore her innate talents. Kuang's debut is set in an alternate version of historical China and is a must-read for fans of epic military fantasy.

Prince of Fools. By Mark Lawrence. 2014. Ace, $26.95 (9780425268780).

The (anti)hero of this series starter is a self-confessed coward, ladies' man, and devout shirker of responsibility who must go on the run after an assassination attempt; oh, and an undead army is threatening the realm as well. Funny and richly told, this trilogy starter is set in Lawrence's Broken Empire world.

She Who Became the Sun. By Shelley Parker-Chan. 2021. Tor, $27.99 (9781250621801).

In this epic high fantasy that explores the powers of desire and free will, a stubborn second daughter decides to trick fate by stealing her brother's identity. He was destined to greatness, but she is hiding out as a male novice in a monastery, so, using somewhat-questionable means, she lands a place in the rebellion against powerful leaders.

These Deathless Shores. By P. H. Low. 2024. Orbit, $19.99 (9780316569200).

In this origin story, two former Lost Boys—one of whom is a girl, a tough and rebellious one who dared to grow up—return to Neverland as adults, where they are destined to become the villains in Peter Pan's story. This play on the Captain Hook legend, with its clever twist on fairy dust and a disturbingly bloody Peter Pan, will entrance fans of dark fairy-tale retellings.

The Wind Weaver. By Julie Johnson. 2025. Ace, $29 (9780593817865).

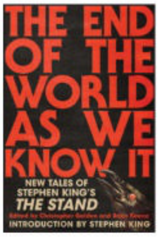
When a fae halfling in hiding in a seaside village crosses paths with a prince, she discovers that she has elemental powers that she must learn to hone to survive. This series starter has everything romantasy readers love: morally gray heroes, angsty romance with spice, and a fantasy world worth exploring.

Continued from p.44

★ The End of the World As We Know It: New Tales of Stephen King's The Stand.

Ed. by Christopher Golden and Brian Keene.

Aug. 2025. 800p. Gallery, $35 (9781668057551); e-book (9781668057575).



Stephen King's iconic postapocalyptic dark fantasy *The Stand*, originally published in 1978, has entertained readers and influenced a generation of writers. In this weighty volume, 34 of them offer their takes on the characters and themes of the novel. The stories, divided into four sections, are organized loosely within the time line of the novel, ending with a possible future in David J. Schow's "Walk on Gilded Splinters," which in itself is reminiscent of Walter M. Miller Jr.'s classic *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. The stories vary from visceral and violent to philosophical, and the breadth and diversity of the included authors add depth to King's world. Gabino Iglasias takes readers on a melancholy journey through virus-ravaged Puerto Rico in "The Hope Boat" and Usman T. Malik imagines Mother Abagail's visions in Pakistan in "The Mosque at the End of the World." With a star-studded list of authors, including some outside the realm of the horror genre, this highly anticipated collection will garner a wide audience. Ardent fans, or as co-editor Brian Keene calls them, "constant readers," will relish the captivating and sometimes repulsive individuals that populate this homage to the battle of good versus evil and the effects of catastrophe that is human nature. —*Craig Clark*

Enter the Peerless.

By Kyle Winkler.

June 2025. 246p. From Beyond, paper, $15.99 (9798987574355).

Elpenor hasn't been a private investigator very long, but certainly long enough to know that there's something weird about this case. In Indiana, 29 people have apparently gone missing: every one of them went into a trailer home (brand name: Peerless) but did not come out. Elpenor finally goes into the trailer himself, aided by two locals, a knife grinder and a janitor. They find themselves in some sort of alternate world, one that is both reassuringly familiar and unnervingly, menacingly, different, ruled over by a being called Fiascoal. The new novel from the author of *Tone-Bone* (2024) and the short-fiction collection *OH PAIN* (2021) is startlingly good: a hard-edged private-eye story that segues into a high-fantasy story of epic proportions, shot through with humor and terror, all of it anchored by Winkler's abundantly realistic, human characters. This is something horror fans haven't quite seen before. The author has a loyal fan base, but he's not exactly a household name. This novel could change that, at least in horror-fan households. —*David Pitt*

The Ever End.

By Audrey Wilson.

Aug. 2025. 260p. Bywater, paper, $18.95 (9781612943237).

There's genuine terror in this story of a woman meeting her future in-laws. Still mourning her mother's death, Margo travels with her fiancé, Sam, to meet his family in rural Iowa. Sam's family seems eager to welcome Margo, but they also have some strange religious beliefs and seem to be massive fans of a dead televangelist. Margo is trying her best not to be judgmental, but she soon starts to believe that her new family has some sinister intentions for her. This psychological thriller-supernatural horror from Wilson (*Wrong Girl Gone*, 2024) has many elements that seem to be fighting for attention while owing a lot of its structure to Jordan Peele's film *Get Out*. However, rather than tackling issues of race, Wilson focuses on gender roles, particularly in how Margo is not only trapped by her family physically but also mentally through gaslighting and obfuscation. Going from awkward to fear-inducing in just over 250 pages, this novel is

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definitely for fans of *Get Out* and other tales of family get-togethers going off the rails. —*James Gardner*

Girl in the Creek.

By Wendy N. Wagner.

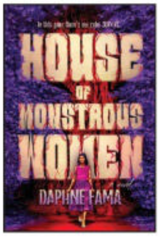
July 2025. 272p. Tor Nightfire, $27.99 (9781250908643); e-book (9781250908650).

Years ago, Erin's brother went missing in the Clackamas Wilderness. When she finds out people have been disappearing in the forest for years, she teams up with her friend Hari, a true-crime podcaster, to find out what is happening. Hari gets intrigued when he realizes that a disproportionate number of people of color are missing. He wants to use his platform to warn others and expose the truth. Erin and Hari convince some of their friends to come help as well as teaming up with some locals. At the same time that Erin and Hari are investigating, an entity known to the reader and itself as the Strangeness is working on expanding its territory. And it is particularly interested in experimenting with what might happen if it were to take over a human body. Erin, Hari, and company have a compelling story, and the Strangeness is a well-crafted, unusual character. Fans of Jeff VanderMeer will not be disappointed by this cli-fi horror tale from Wagner (*The Secret Skin*, 2021). —*Emily Whitmore*

House of Monstrous Women.

By Daphne Fama.

Aug. 2025. 336p. Berkley, $29 (9780593817582); e-book (9780593817599).



Debut author Fama blends Filipino folklore, occult rituals, and political unrest in this unsettling gothic-horror novel set in 1986 against the backdrop of the People Power Revolution. Eleven years ago, Josephine del Rosario's family was murdered as a political statement. Now 26, her only surviving relative, brother Alejandro, is in Manila, where revolution brews, while she struggles to maintain their family's home in Carigara. Josephine is enticed by an invitation from beloved childhood friend Hiraya Ranoco, whose family is said to be witches, to visit their estate and play a familiar game, a family ritual Hiraya claims will ensure the winners the future they desire. Josephine joins Alejandro and their friend Gabriella at the dizzyingly decorated, confusingly labyrinthine Ranoco home, where their childhood game of tagu-tagu (hide and seek) takes on an ominous new intensity. Fama creates an oppressive atmosphere of simmering dread as Hiraya's secrets are slowly revealed, and the story explodes into a terrifying hunt through increasingly nightmarish environments. Themes of political oppression, intergenerational trauma, and feminine power reflect in both the real-world and supernatural horrors Josephine must survive. This is a sharp, scary read perfect for fans of Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020). —*Krista Hutley*

In the Veins of the Drowning.

By Kalie Cassidy.

July 2025. 384p. Little, Brown, paper, $19.99 (9780316587600); e-book (9780316587617).

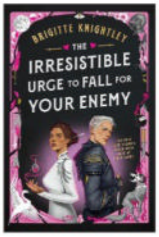
For a majority of her life, Imogen has hidden a dangerous secret. The cruel and evil ruler Nema wants nothing more than to destroy her kind. Sirens are believed to be nothing but bloodthirsty monsters after all. However, with "boy king" Theordore Ariti, she can't hide what she is anymore. Her powers are starting to emerge, and she forms an unlikely blood bond with the young royal visitor. With their only option to run, they must face dangerous waters and also fight the growing attraction Imogen has for her blood-bonded. However, what lies on the journey ahead is more dangerous than they anticipated. Will it be Imogen who is the hunter, or will she have to face her fears in order to become the hunted and save everyone? Cassidy's debut has everything from evil rulers to broody heroes to bad-ass heroines yet to discover their potential. Filled with romantic tension and questionable choices at each turn of this spine-thrilling journey, this romantasy will appeal to fans of Hannah Witten's *For the Wolf* (2021) and Rachel Gillig's *One Dark Window* (2022). —*Bre Weeks*

The Irresistible Urge to Fall for Your Enemy.

By Brigitte Knightley.

July 2025. 384p. Ace, $30 (9780593819456); e-book (9780593819470).

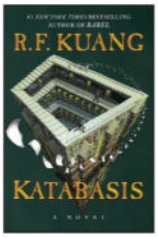
Knightly's debut is an absolute joy, full of well-written banter and entertaining vignettes. Readers will be captivated by an exceptionally clever magical system, several concurrent mysteries, and the slowest of slow burn romances between two people who absolutely hate each other. Osric Mordaunt and Aurienne Fairhrim are sworn enemies, each belonging to opposing magical orders. Aurienne is a Haelan, vowing to use her magic to protect and heal mankind; Osric is a Fyren, trained to walk the Dusken Paths, killing and dealing in secrets for money. When Osric's magic begins to falter, he does the only thing he can think of—bribe a Haelan to help him discover a cure. What follows is the most delightful of enemies-to-lovers plots as Osric and Aurienne research fairy stories and forgotten lore and attempt magical treatments in far-flung places, all while trading delightfully barbed quips in a series of increasingly ridiculous attempts to save Osric's magic and ultimately his life. While it might cause captivated readers real anguish when this book ends on an abrupt cliffhanger, the possibility of more to come in an entertaining series will definitely make up for it. This is a superlative read deserving of very real praise. —*Judith Utz*



Katabasis.

By R. F. Kuang.

Aug. 2025. 560p. Harper Voyager, $32 (9780063446243); e-book (9780063021495).



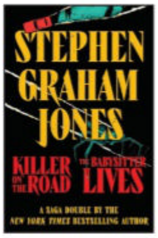
Alice Law is overcaffeinated, exhausted, and emotionally wrecked. But it's all worth it. Once dissertation advisor Jacob Grimes gives her his recommendation, she'll be well on her way to being one of the best academics in Magick. But then, he explodes. And it might be her fault. So she has only one option: go on down to Hell and retrieve him. Unfortunately, Peter Murdoch, her rival and former friend, has come to the same conclusion, and so the man who always seems to float through the world she has to claw through follows her into Hell. But as the two of them confront panicked shades, impossible choices, and bone-clacking monsters, their trust in each other (or lack of) will decide whether they survive. Kuang revisits dark academia (as she did in the award-winning, best-selling *Babel*, 2022), this time combining a Magick rooted in paradox with witty world building to give readers a simultaneous satire of and love letter to academia. At turns hilarious and sobering, *Katabasis* explores the hells we create for ourselves, as Peter and Alice consider the delusions they wrap themselves in and the sacrifices they've made to get this far. Witty, propulsive, feral, and clever. —*Leah von Essen*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: After Kuang's *Babel* (2022) and *Yellowface* (2023) both became instant best-sellers, *Katabasis* will be in tremendous demand from fantasy and general readers alike.

Killer on the Road/The Babysitter Lives.

By Stephen Graham Jones.

July 2025. 432p. Saga, paper, $19.99 (9781982167677).



Jones (*The Buffalo Hunter Hunter*, 2025) returns with a single volume featuring two short novels, reminiscent of taking in a double feature by a favorite horror director. On the surface the novels appear vastly different in tone, gore, and scare level, yet both are firmly united by Jones' unique narrative voice and his ability to pull fresh takes from established tropes, in this case the hitchhiking serial killer and the hungry haunted house. The never-before-published "Killer of the Road" is the action-driven, visceral, in-your-face, final-girl tale of Harper, as she attempts to run away but ends up in a high-speed fight for her life on Interstate 80 headed west from Laramie. In the previously audio-only "The Babysitter Lives," readers watch helplessly as Charlotte's routine babysitting job sets

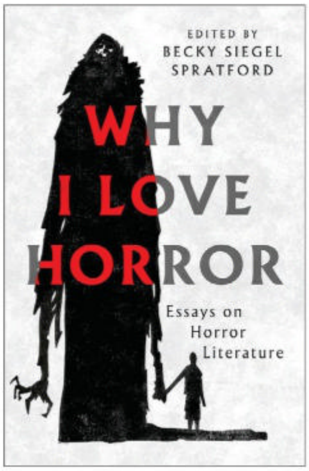
Continued on p.50

Talking With
Becky Siegel Spratford

By Susan Maguire

I have learned so much by asking why—about readers, writers, and myself,” writes Becky Siegel Spratford in her introduction to the fabulous essay collection, *Why I Love Horror* (2025). Spratford, the library world’s foremost expert on the genre, invited 18 of today’s biggest horror writers to ask themselves “why,” and the results are enlightening, moving, funny, and a little scary. You can hear our full interview in *Shelf Care: The Podcast*, Episode 42.

Maguire: ***You mentioned a horror renaissance in your introduction, and I think anyone who reads*** **Booklist** ***can see the variety coming out of the genre.***
Spratford: We live in a time, unfortunately, of existential terror. As I’ve noted in my textbooks for ALA Editions (*The Readers’ Advisory Guide to Horror*, 2021) and as Stephen King says in *Danse Macabre*, times of social and economic upheaval are times of great increase in horror. When things are going badly, you either want something that’s very comforting and happy or something even worse. We’re also seeing an influx of younger horror writers. Authors like Mary SanGiovanni, Stephen Graham Jones, and Gabino Iglesias, who are featured in the book, are teaching writing at universities, turning out writers who are allowed to explore genre in their work. We’re also seeing a rise in people from marginalized communities exploring horror—and this is my favorite part of horror right now—looking at the traditions and the tropes, but inserting their own marginalization and troubles with connecting with the world, and turning it into something that provides that extra level of fear.



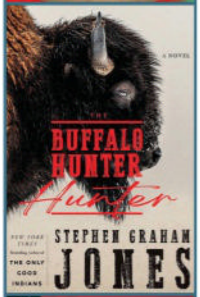
Maguire: ***There’s a great variety in here, but did you see any through lines in the contributions?***
Spratford: I have a couple of essays where geeky kids who felt disconnected from the rest of the world found solace in the weird. One that stands out is Hailey Piper’s love of Godzilla, how that monster allowed her to become who she is. Another through line I saw was authors who actively didn’t want to write horror. Victor LaValle’s essay is about how hard he worked to *not* write horror. Rachel Harrison, one of our newest voices, also talked about actively resisting horror. The biggest through line I saw, and which I’m so thankful for, is how much of themselves people were willing to share. Grady Hendrix wrote an essay about his relationship with his dad. If you read Grady, you know he talks about his mom and his sisters and he really captures women well. But when he turned in this essay, I was shocked. You’ll understand when you read it. Alma Katsu writes about her experience in the NSA. Her essay is terrifying. I put it early in the collection so people understand we’re talking about human monsters, too.

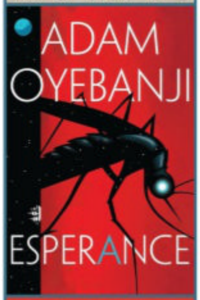
Maguire: ***What do you hope readers and library workers get out of this book?***
Spratford: On the most basic level, this book makes the perfect sign for any of your horror displays. You print a picture of the cover, and fill the display with horror books. It will speak for itself. I always talk to library workers, and I love helping them help readers. It gives me so much joy to do that as my job. But I do feel like I have a lot to share with readers. I hope that fans of one of the authors in the book will start with that [author’s] essay. And then it draws them to a read-alike author, and they’re like, wow, I had never heard of this person before. I had feedback from a school librarian in Indiana who said, “Nuzo Onoh’s essay hit me.” It is a very emotional essay.

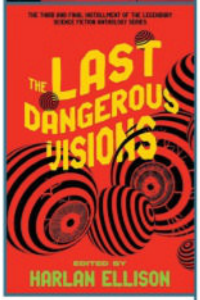
Maguire: ***The title begs the question, why do you love horror?***
Spratford: I love horror because quite honestly, I grew up in the suburbs of New York living a pretty boring life. I started with weird. I was obsessed with Shel Silverstein as a kid. That’s the easy answer. One thing that probably laid the foundation for why I love horror is growing up as the granddaughter of a Holocaust refugee. I was close with my grandmother. There are things that my family talked about—death and war and genocide—all the time. Until I started the Holocaust refugee reparations process, I didn’t really engage with how important that was. There is such a thing as generational trauma.

Maguire: ***Is there anything else you want to say about*** **Why I Love Horror*****?***
Spratford: I really hope you embrace this as something to give to your fiction readers. Yes, the essays are nonfiction. They capture why people love horror, but they also capture the different ways horror is written. Some pieces are closer to short stories. Stephen Graham Jones’ list is just the best. If you read nothing else, just go read that. It’s sort of the justification for the entire book.

Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror







The year's best sf/fantasy and horror, reviewed in *Booklist* from August 2024 to May 2025, address deep themes like grief, found family, and the horrors of war while showcasing imaginative narrative techniques. —*Susan Maguire*

Angel Down. By Daniel Kraus. 2025. Atria, $28.99 (9781668068458).
A group of misfits in WWI France discovers a fallen angel in dangerous no-man's land, and each is mesmerized by her light and tempted by her power, in a novel that weaves a narrative spell as it reveals the gruesome cost of war.

Bochica. By Carolina Flórez-Cerchiaro. 2025. Atria/Primero Sueno, $27.99 (9781668062579).
This gothic masterwork set in 1920s Bogotá tells the story of a young woman who is unable to escape her family home and the guilt that gnaws at her over the circumstances of her mother's death.

The Buffalo Hunter Hunter. By Stephen Graham Jones. 2025. Saga, $29.99 (9781668075081).
A Blackfeet vampire roams the Montana prairie in 1912 looking for vengeance, visiting a Lutheran minister each Sunday to give his confession, in a satisfying horror novel that speaks to larger themes of death and sovereignty.

Esperance. By Adam Oyebanji. 2025. DAW, $29 (9780756419912).
In this excellent sf-thriller, a man follows a strange case from Chicago to Africa and Rhode Island while a being makes her way to Edinburgh, searching for information about a 1700s slave ship.

The Improvisers. By Nicole Glover. 2024. Harper Voyager, $19.99 (9780063293595).
In the early days of flight, an African American aviator and magical investigator looks into mysterious items provoking discord all over America, in this complex mystery full of screwball-comedy banter.

The Last Dangerous Visions. Ed. by Harlan Ellison. 2024. Blackstone, $27.99 (9798212183796).
The long-awaited concluding volume of Ellison's groundbreaking speculative-fiction anthology, completed by J. Michael Straczynski, mixes genre luminaries and contemporary voices to present a deep, daring, and inventive collection.

Notes from a Regicide. By Isaac Fellman. 2025. Tor.com, $27.99 (9781250329103).
A trans man uncovers the secret lives of his adoptive parents, a trans couple, upon their deaths in a triumphant and blistering chronicle of found family, love, and resistance, brimming with wit and queer joy amidst the violence of rebellion.

The River Has Roots. By Amal El-Mohtar. 2025. Tor.com, $24.99 (9781250341082).
In a small but epic package that evokes the violence of old Grimm fairy tales, El-Mohtar takes readers to the edge of the River Liss, where a woman is tempted by the world of faerie but, when betrayal strikes, only wants her sister.

Water Moon. By Samantha Sotto Yambao. 2025. Del Rey, $28.99 (9780593724996).
This charming, vivid novel follows a woman who inherits her father's magical pawnshop when he disappears, and the terrifying creatures who rule her world demand an artifact her father took with him.

When the Moon Hits Your Eye. By John Scalzi. 2025. Tor, $29.99 (9780765389091).
When the moon turns to a substance that resembles cheese, it throws the world into a tailspin in this novel that shifts narratives from NASA to the White House to a small-town diner in Oklahoma, holding a mirror up to society .

Continued from p.48

her on a harrowing hunt through a house of inexplicable terror. Both stories will hold readers rapt with their sympathetic and well-developed heroines, begging them to finish each in as few sittings as possible even as their emotions are put through the wringer while simultaneously forcing them to confront a fear that jumps off the page, straight into their guts. But they will love every second of it. —*Becky Spratford*

YA: *Teen horror readers will flock to Alex Award–winning Jones' double feature that stars two strong—but very different—teen girls at its center. BS.*

Kingdom of Tomorrow.
By Gena Showalter.

Aug. 2025. 366p. Amazon/Montlake, paper, $16.99 (9781662530524); e-book (9781662530517).

Best-selling author Showalter is a legend in the paranormal-romance sphere, and here she offers the first in a new series about a young woman who discovers the true enemy may be the very leaders she is supposed to follow. Arden Roosa is not meant for military life; she's a plant girlie who has panic attacks. But if she wants to wipe away a debt her mother incurred when she contracted the Madness, Arden must join Ourland's forces, CURED, putting her agricultural dreams on hold for three years. Thrown into the trenches, Arden learns to fight the enemy that has besieged Ourland for centuries—the ones who cause the Madness. The training isn't easy, but it helps that her troop leader, Cyrus, is smoldering. And that his eyes seem to linger on her for a beat too long. And that cute medic Shiloh is also showing interest. But romance may have to wait when tragedy strikes and Arden discovers everything she thought she knew to be a lie. *Kingdom of Tomorrow* is a fun series starter with romance, action, and intrigue that will keep readers turning the pages. —*LynnDee Wathen*

A Legionnaire's Guide to Love and Peace.
By Emily Skrutskie.

June 2025. 368p. Del Rey, paper, $19 (9780593974070); e-book (9780593974216).

Soldiers aren't allowed to fraternize, but on the evening before a hopeless battle, longtime comrades Kat and Emory figure they might as well hook up before they die the next day. Only—they don't die! When the war seems to be at its most dire, a hereto-unknown prince appears, using impressive magic to defeat the Demon Lord. Obviously, Kat is happy to have survived, but what is she supposed to do: resume her friendship with Emory even as her desire for him grows, or continue their clandestine relations? To make matters more baffling, the prince takes her on as a confidante and everyone around Kat primes her for leadership, even though she doesn't yet see those skills in herself. No longer fighting for survival and facing a plethora of promising opportunities, Kat must determine what she truly wants out of life. With boots-on-the-ground battle scenes, a tall and bulky heroine, and a friends-to-lovers relationship that shows two people reveling in one another's company (in addition to a steamy scene or two), this is a unique and welcome addition to the romantasy genre. —*Biz Hyzy*

Lessons in Magic and Disaster.
By Charlie Jane Anders.

Aug. 2025. 320p. Tor, $29.99 (9781250867322); e-book (9781250867346).

Jamie, a queer academic writing a dissertation about eighteenth-century women writers, is worried about her mother Serena. Ever since Jamie's other mother, Mae, died, Serena has holed up in a one-bedroom schoolhouse, a mess of grief and guilt. So Jamie makes a decision: She'll introduce her mother to the magic of offerings and desire that she's been able to use since she was a teen. But it takes no time at all before Serena is pressing up against all the known and unknown limitations of magic, and skirting ethical questions besides. To stop her mother, Jamie will have to figure out the magic she's always guessed at—and confront the deep-seated trauma and issues both she and her mother have kept buried. Anders (*Even Greater Mistakes*, 2021) crafts an intriguing novel rooted more in the politics of one queer family—two queer women and their trans daughter—than the delicate magic that floats through the plot. The mother-daughter story about honesty, guilt, and love is complex and richly emotional. Fans of Alice Hoffman's work will enjoy. —*Leah von Essen*

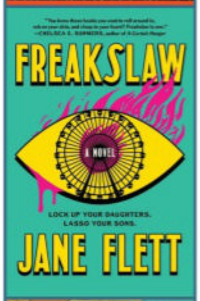
The Lighthouse at the Edge of the World.
By J. R. Dawson.

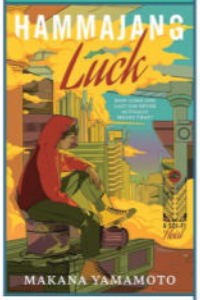
July 2025. 352p. Tor, $28.99 (9781250805584); e-book (9781250805607).

Nera Harosen has lived her entire life at the Station, a lighthouse in Chicago constructed to help the dead cross into the afterlife. Her friends are the station dogs who accompany the dead on the ferry across the river, and her father runs the station while preparing her to take over when it's inevitably his time to cross over. Her easy, stress-free routine is disrupted by the arrival of Charlie Conner, a woman very much alive, who turns up at the Station looking for her recently deceased sister Sam. Meanwhile, the lighthouse's power is dimming, and when it's discovered that Charlie's music can keep the light on, she agrees to stay and play in exchange for help finding Sam. Nera and Charlie strike up a friendship that quickly deepens into something more, leading both women to important self-discovery and enables them to find inner strengths previously thought nonexistent. Dawson's latest (after *First Bright Thing*, 2023) is gripping, with characters that readers can identify with, and a heartwrenching story that shines a beacon of hope at its conclusion. —*Carrie Rasak*

Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts

DENGUE BOY
A NOVEL
MICHEL NIEVA
TRANSLATED BY RAHUL BERY





The best sf/fantasy and horror debuts, all reviewed in *Booklist* from August 2024 through May 2025, showcase exciting new voices in the genres who explore dystopian worlds, sinister magic, and the perils of technology. —*Susan Maguire*

Dengue Boy. By Michel Nieva. Tr. by Rahul Bery. 2025. Astra, $25 (9781662602658).

A mutant mosquito, born to a human mother, grows up to wreak destruction in a dystopian world where Antarctica is the new Caribbean, while a video game-obsessed tween smuggles contraband, in a pessimistic and transformative debut.

Freakslaw. By Jane Flett. 2025. Zando, $28 (9781638932666).

In a mundane Scottish town in 1997, two teens seek escape in a traveling funfair that turns out to have sinister intentions. Debut author Flett blends supernatural horror, queer fiction, and magical realism.

Greenteeth. By Molly O'Neill. 2025. Orbit, $18.99 (9780316584241).

Jenny Greenteeth, a lake monster, teams up with a nearly-drowned witch and a goblin peddler to fulfill the promises made by fae royalty to save her lake in this debut inspired by the stories of King Arthur and Welsh folklore.

Hammajang Luck. By Makana Yamamoto. 2025. Harper Voyager, $19.99 (9780063430822).

When their ex-partner in crime proposes one last job, Edie, along with a ragtag crew, ransoms the tech secrets of a bioengineering mogul in this action-packed, dystopian-set heist novel full of lovable characters and Hawaiian representation.

One Yellow Eye. By Leigh Radford. 2025. Gallery, $28.99 (9781668081211).

With a mounting sense of dread and terror to rival any on-page bloodbath, Radford's debut follows a cancer researcher who is keeping her zombie-infected husband sedated in her guest room while searching for a cure.

rekt. By Alex Gonzalez. 2025. Kensington/Erewhon, $28 (9781645661597).

A chronically online and emotionally numb man stumbles upon a dark-web site that features AI-generated death scenarios, leaking a frenetic bloodbath into the world, in a debut rife with shock, gore, and twists galore.

A Resistance of Witches. By Morgan Ryan. 2025. Viking, $30 (9780593831960).

In this historical fantasy that explores the powerful magic mothers possess, a witch must find a magical relic before the Nazis do, and, heartbroken after a ceremony gone wrong, finds unlikely allies in her quest.

A Song of Legends Lost. By M. H. Ayinde. 2025. Saga, $19.99 (9781668086834).

A woman living in a slum unexpectedly invokes a spirit in a world where magic is forbidden. Ayinde's debut strikes a fine balance between narrators of different classes, world building and action, and sf and fantasy.

There Is a Rio Grande in Heaven. By Ruben Reyes Jr. 2024. Mariner, $28 (9780063336278).

Salvadorans rewrite the narrative in this jewel-like collection of speculative stories in which past and future collide, featuring a corrupt president, a sinister technology company, and a singer who boosts her career with a fake romance.

Two Truths and a Lie. By Cory O'Brien. 2025. Pantheon, $28 (9780593687284).

Ross McDonald meets William Gibson in this superb cyberpunk noir set in a Los Angeles beset by rising oceans, featuring a fact-checker who reluctantly works with the cops to solve the death of his company's CEO.

Livewire.

By Sarah Raughley.

Sept. 2025. 260p. Blackstone, $28.99 (9798212183512).

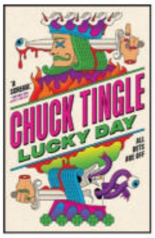
Amanda McKee has a lot going on. She's a high-school student, a beauty influencer, and the adopted daughter of a tech billionaire. She also has the power to control machines and technology, though that's not part of her very public persona. When she was younger, she used her powers to ruin lives on her gossip blog, Livewire. But Amanda has put all of that behind her as she starts a new life in Tokyo—until armored warriors start attacking and a very handsome boy from the future tries to kill her. YA author Raughley (*The Queen's Spade*, 2025) brings the long-running Valiant-comic-book superhero to a new audience and fleshes out her origin story. *Livewire* is full of twists and turns, pop-culture references from around the world, and snappy dialogue. Amanda's life is full of secrets, but the revelations and emotional moments are mixed in with breathless action scenes that mirror her comic-book beginnings. Perfect for fans of Marie Lu, Kekla Magoon, or superhero action with a pop twist. —*Ashley Rayner*

> **YA:** *Teen readers of sf and action-oriented comics will be thrilled by high-schooler Amanda's adventures. AR.*

★ Lucky Day.

By Chuck Tingle.

July 2025. 304p. Tor Nightfire, $27.99 (9781250398659); e-book (9781250398666).



Tingle's latest (after *Bury Your Gays*, 2024) is an absurd romp, but underneath the off-the-wall mayhem lies his most sophisticated work to date. Vera, a statistics professor, is celebrating the release of her first book—about a casino in Las Vegas where, impossibly, the odds are tipped in the visitors' favor—when the world experiences the Low Probability Event (LPE), a convergence of the most unlikely things, that kills almost eight million people. Four years later, as Vera is still struggling to come to terms with what happened, Federal LPE Agent Layne convinces her to join the investigation into how the casino is involved. Vera must overcome her own worst fears and use her mathematical gifts to rebalance the scales of luck before it is too late. Tingle brilliantly allows the more bonkers and visceral scenes to give readers the space and time necessary to emotionally handle the existentially bleak and terrifying reality staring them in the face. Even if "nothing" matters, readers know not to fear because love always wins when Tingle is in charge. For fans of satirical, tongue-firmly-planted-in-cheek speculative works as wide ranging as Jasper Fforde's *Lost in a Good Book* (2002), Percival Everett's *Dr. No* (2022), and the novels of Jason Pargin. —*Becky Spratford*

The Magician of Tiger Castle.

By Louis Sachar.

Aug. 2025. 320p. Ace, $30 (9780593952306); e-book (9780593952313).

Magician Anatole is revisiting Tiger Castle as a tourist. The tour guides tell stories about the Whispering King and a princess who was abducted on her wedding night as well as a man who was kept in the dungeons for nearly a hundred years. When Anatole lived there, it was still the castle of Esquaveta, a kingdom which no longer exists. Anatole recounts the events leading up to the date of Princess Tullia of Esquaveta's politically motivated wedding to Prince Dalrympl of Oxatania. When Tullia falls in love with an apprentice scribe, her parents demand that Anatole create a potion to ensure that she goes through with the marriage. Anatole is faced with a difficult choice between his fondness for the princess and his concern for his reputation. What follows is a fairy-tale adventure through the thorny wilds of memory and history via a rather unreliable outsider's narrative of love, redemption, and some interesting failures. Sachar's first foray into adult books lacks some of the madcap whimsy of his middle-grade work, but readers will be entertained and enchanted. —*Regina Schroeder*

Mayra.

By Nicky Gonzalez.

July 2025. 240p. Random, $28 (9780593731550); e-book (9780593731567).

As teens in Hialeah, Florida, timid Ingrid and rebellious Mayra were the very best of friends. But when Mayra left their Cuban enclave to attend college, the girls drifted apart, and years go by with no contact. So, when Mayra suddenly and unexpectedly invites Ingrid to spend a weekend with her at a house in the Everglades, Ingrid is equal parts irritated and tempted. She's soon driving deep into the swamp, where there's no phone service and few people. Ingrid, Mayra, and Mayra's boyfriend, Benji, quickly settle into a pattern of decadent meals, hiking, and exploring the odd, sprawling house they're staying in. Mayra is as warm and bold as ever, but Ingrid eventually becomes unsettled by Benji and the strange pull the house is having on them all. This debut examines the ways people can either find or lose themselves in intense friendships. With very little overtly scary content, this slow-burn novel will have readers on the edges of their seats by the end. Recommend to fans of Stephen King's *Duma Key* (2008), David Mitchell's *Slade House* (2015), or *Bunny* (2019), by Mona Awad. —*Stephanie Klose*

Moonflow.

By Bitter Karella.

Sept. 2025. 384p. Run for It, paper, $18.99 (9780316581936); e-book (9780316581929).

In the debut novel from the creative force behind the humorous Midnight Pals social-media account, Sarah, a trans woman, grows mushrooms and likes to party hard. From friend Madeleine she finds out about a potent drug called the King's Breakfast that can bend realities and reveal otherworldly beings. Unfortunately, this fungus only grows in one dangerous Northern California forest where multiple people have disappeared and rumors of creatures abound. Sarah has to team up with a ragtag band of companions, including Andy, who knows the forest very well. When Sarah learns about a mercurial figure, the Green Lady, with a strange following, things intensify. Karella seamlessly blends dark humor, heist elements, and frightening bits of horror. The novel refreshingly explores Sarah's transness, her complex desires, and her resilience. Plenty of dangers lie in wait for Sarah and the unique cast of supporting characters who, as tensions mount, turn on one other. Although the plot lags in some places, *Moonflow* is an intensely entertaining novel that fans of mushroom horror will gobble up. —*A. E. Siraki*

The Once and Future Me.

By Melissa Pace.

Aug. 2025. 384p. Holt, $29.99 (9781250358677); e-book (9781250358660).

Waking up not knowing who she is, a woman is startled to see that she is on a bus headed to Hanover State Psychiatric Hospital. The woman is told she is Dorothy Frasier, a young wife in 1954 Virginia who has had a series of violent episodes. The woman has a hard time believing she is a mere housewife, as her innate fighting skills speak to a different life. Suddenly, she is transported to the year 2035 and a dystopian future. She, Bix, was sent back to the past to find the key to halting a future pandemic that decimates the globe. But in 1954, the doctors and her husband give proof she is Dorothy and want her to submit to harsh medical treatments. Desperate to discover the truth about herself, the woman embarks on a dangerous path that will either prove the doctors right or save mankind. In her debut novel, Pace asks intriguing questions about the nature of reality. Mixing elements of dystopia with feminist historical fiction, Pace creates a winning psychological thriller that will have readers eagerly turning the pages. —*Lynnanne Pearson*

Red Rabbit Ghost.

By Jen Julian.

July 2025. 336p. Run for It, paper, $18.99 (9780316580564); e-book (9780316580571).

When he receives an anonymous message claiming to have answers about his mother's mysterious death 18 years ago in Blacknot, North Carolina, Jesse Calloway returns to his backwoods hometown after only a year away at college, hoping to finally get some closure. But as his investigations bring him into conflict with his dangerous ex-boyfriend and the mercurial daughter of the local pork manufacturer, he quickly discovers that Blacknot harbors a sinister power determined to keep him from the answers he seeks. As he becomes more drawn to the center of that power, a place on the outskirts of town known only as The Night House, the very fabric of Blacknot seems in danger of unraveling. Julian's queer, southern-gothic debut is a heady and atmospheric rumination on grief and belonging that will appeal to readers who enjoyed *The Hollow Places* (2020), by T. Kingfisher, and *Summer Sons,* by Lee Mandelo (2021), and is a perfect pick for fans of *Twin Peaks*. —*Kaitlin Conner*

Royal Gambit.

By Daniel O'Malley.

July 2025. 416p. Little, Brown, $30 (9780316568104); e-book (9780316568135).

The Prince of Wales is dead. Assassinated, apparently. The Checquy, the top-secret arm of the British government that employs agents with supernatural powers to protect the country from unearthly forces, immediately assigns an agent to protect Princess Louise, the dead man's sister. Enter the twelfth Lady Mondegreen, Alexandra Dennis-Palmer-Hudson-Gilmore-Garnsey (otherwise: Alix), a longtime friend of the royal family. But this is no simple observe-and-protect assignment: in fact Alix, whose own supernatural power allows her to shatter human bones at will, isn't sure which is more difficult, investigating the prince's murder or learning how to be a lady-in-waiting. It is extremely difficult to explain just how thrilling, entertaining, witty, and jaw-droppingly original the Checquy novels are (this is the fourth, the newest since *Blitz*, 2022). O'Malley's world building is astonishing: he's created a version of our world that is simultaneously wildly different and comfortably familiar, and he's populated it with characters who, even with unusual powers, are abundantly human. For fans of the series, and indeed for anyone who enjoys a good supernatural fantasy, *Royal Gambit* is required reading. —*David Pitt*

Salt Bones.

By Jennifer Givhan.

July 2025. 384p. Little, Brown/Mulholland, $29 (9780316581523); e-book (9780316581547).

Just as local farms have contaminated the Salton Sea, family secrets have also poisoned the nearby Mexicali town of El Valle. Malamar Veracruz has lived with the blame for her teen sister Elena's disappearance for years. Now grown and with two girls of her own, Mal is determined not to let her daughters meet a similar fate. With her brother running for Senate and oldest daughter romantically entangled with the local farming scion, Mal finds herself face-to-face with the horrible horse-woman of lore, La Siguanaba, and heeds her warning as another young woman vanishes, followed by her own youngest daughter going missing. Mal begins a wild search for her girl amidst hideous visions of La Siguanaba and her voracious appetite. Givhan's prose fluidly unfolds in both English and Spanish, planting the action in the environmental and emotional pollution of El Valle, where skeletons seem more likely to bloom than flowers. The pairing of family trauma and terrifying folklore makes this a sure bet for fans of Jessica Johns (*Bad Cree*, 2023) and V. Castro (*The Haunting of Alejandra*, 2023). —*Erin Downey Howerton*

Send Flowers.

By Emily Buchanan.

July 2025. 352p. Park Row, $28.99 (9780778368380); e-book (9780369760951).

Fiona has been hunkering down in her apartment for months. Ever since her boyfriend, Ed, died, she has hidden herself away from the world and shut out those close to her, even neglecting her cat and the jungle of houseplants that she and Ed cultivated together. She is especially wary of engaging with her massive online following, despite her contract as a "greenfluencer." One day, a potted plant mysteriously appears on her doorstep with a cryptic note. The plant is a yew, Ed's favorite. Fiona starts hearing Ed's voice and becomes convinced that he has come back in the form of a plant. This revelation helps spur her into action and back into the world, with Ed pushing her boundaries. Fiona realizes that while she was grieving, climate change and severe drought have continued to ravage London and beyond. With Ed's encouragement, she finds herself back in the mix with climate activists and on a journey to rediscover her purpose. This captivating debut novel is a heartfelt piece of speculative climate fiction which explores grief, morality, and the importance of community. —*Patricia Smith*

Soulgazer.

By Maggie Rapier.

July 2025. 480p. Ace, paper, $19 (9780593819272); e-book (9780593819289).

All Saoirse wants is to be free. However, she's reminded both of a curse bestowed upon her and her father's constant reminder of his heir's death. Freedom seems to be so far from her grasp now that she's betrothed to a cruel Stone King; the only way to freedom is to break her curse. When she encounters the legendary Wolf of the Wind pirate captain, Faolan, she doesn't know whether he will be her freedom or her downfall. He's vowed to rid the evil magic and Saoirse's curse by finding the mythical Isle of Lost Souls. Saoirse sees this as an opportunity, but can she trust a rotten pirate's word? Throughout the journey, Saorise will have to face danger and an ever-growing bond that starts to form between her and the pirate captain she is now in service to. Rapier's spicy debut romantasy sets sail against a Celtic-inspired backdrop, filled with action and enough romantic tension to keep readers guessing about what will happen next. —*Bre Weeks*

Strange Houses.

By Uketsu. Tr. by Jim Rion.

June 2025. 208p. illus. HarperVia, paper, $17.99 (9780063433151); e-book (9780063433168).

As he did with *Strange Pictures* (2025), Uketsu takes readers into a world of speculation, this time revolving around the meaning behind house floor plans. The unnamed narrator, a freelance writer of articles dealing with macabre topics, relates how he became increasingly involved in investigating a house with an unusual blueprint. He consults with an architectural draughtsman friend, which leads to an outlandish theory of the purpose behind certain unsettling discrepancies in the plans that the writer uses for his next exposé. The article draws the attention of a woman who may know more about the house, prompting the writer to consider the design drawings for two other houses. The houses may be connected, and the writer begins to believe something unsavory has been taking place. What started out as a story based on pure speculation evolves into a generational tale involving murder, curses, revenge, and familial succession. Inclusion of the house-layout drawings as each plot twist is contemplated will draw readers into the increasingly complex horror-mystery. —*Lucy Lockley*

A Tale of Mirth & Magic.

By Kristen Vale.

Aug. 2025. 288p. Forever, paper, $17.99 (9781538771822); e-book (9781538771839).

Elikki is a nomad elf who uses her metal magic to make jewelry that she sells in markets, and this time she's landed in Povon. Business is booming—that is, until an unruly customer tries to lay a hand on her. A handsome, lilac-skinned half giant named Barra tries to come to her defense, but Elikki proves that she's no damsel in distress. All that changes when the law comes after Elikki and Barra helps Elikki escape Povon. Now on the run, Elikki and Barra learn about each other and can't deny the growing attraction between them. But will they be able to let their guard down and open their hearts? Or will the law catch up with them before love can bloom? Vale's debut is a charming, queer, cozy romantasy that features enigmatic characters, road-trip shenanigans, and spicy intimate scenes interwoven with themes of healing from past traumas and coming into your authentic self. Fans of Travis Baldree or Kimberly Lemming will enjoy. —*LynnDee Wathen*

Ten Sleep.

By Nicholas Belardes.

June 2025. 288p. Kensington/Erewhon, $28 (9781645661320); e-book (9781645661344).

The consequences of a fatal 100-year-old deal between greedy cattle barons and an ancient canyon entity come to a head in Belardes' evocative follow-up to *The Deading* (2024). In modern-day Ten Sleep, Wyoming, listless college dropout Greta Molina is offered the chance to join a 10-day cattle drive whose route has a haunted reputation. In need of the money and the company of some old friends, Greta brushes aside concerns and accepts the job. But mere hours into the journey, it's clear that something isn't right and that the canyon seeks new blood. As unexplainable threats escalate (including taxidermied animals coming to life and a prehistoric bird flying away with a dead calf), Greta wonders if she and her compatriots will make it out alive—and what it might take to survive. Defying easy categorization, Belardes' atmospheric slow burn alternates between Greta's perspective and short interstitials told from the points of view of the canyon's wildlife, upping the stakes as the area's secrets are revealed. Fans of Weird Westerns and ecohorror will want to check out this ambitious offering. —*Kaitlin Conner*

Teo's Durumi.

By Elaine U. Cho.

Aug. 2025. 418p. Zando/Hillman Grad, $29 (9781638932291); e-book (9781638933656).

The crews of the Pandia and Ohneul have crash-landed relatively safely on the moon—thanks to Ocean's unparalleled piloting skill—and now they get to navigate the consequences. Diplomat Park, former classmate of Ocean's, helps them in exchange for a future favor; Jang Yeonghui, scion of a wealthy family, gives them shelter as a favor to Teo. Some kind of betrayal is inevitable, and it begins with an ersatz guard trying to assassinate Teo, followed by an encounter with someone whose MO is suspiciously reminiscent of how Teo's family was killed. Teo and the crews come up with a risky plan to clear his name, get confessions from the actual guilty parties, and stop Corvus' murderous revenge tour. After that, Teo will have to contend with the atrocities the Anand family is responsible for and how to manage his father's complicated legacy. Nothing goes as smoothly as the plan, but it does culminate in some cinematic action set pieces; the team dynamic continues to be strong, as crew relationships shift and romance blooms. A worthy sequel to *Ocean's Godori* (2024), *Teo's Durumi* certainly sticks its landing. —*Regina Schroeder*

This Vicious Hunger.

By Francesca May.

Aug. 2025. 432p. Redhook, $30 (9780316287531); e-book (9780316287982).

Thora is an intelligent young woman in a painfully patriarchal society, reeling from the death of her father, an arranged marriage, and the sudden demise of her new husband in short order. When she receives a scholarship offer—usually reserved for men—from an old friend of her father's to study at St. Elianto, her mother-in-law decides that life as a scholar would reflect better on the family than life in a nunnery. Thora's excitement increases when she realizes that her mentor, Dr. Petaccia, is also a woman, renowned for her expertise in botany. Petaccia insists Thora attend lectures on varied subjects before revealing her true research subject: conquering death itself. Meanwhile Thora meets Petaccia's ward, Olea, who lives in a garden of poisonous plants, may be poisonous herself, and is an unwilling part of Petaccia's experiments. Thora's exposure to Olea and her garden results in a burgeoning relationship with minimal physical contact, leading her deeper into Petaccia's research in hopes of finding a cure for Olea. Readers of dark fantasy will enjoy this sapphic romance tinged with elements of horror. —*Frances Moritz*

The Unkillable Frank Lightning.

By Josh Rountree.

July 2025. 240p. Tachyon, paper, $17.95 (9781616964368); e-book (9781616964375).

In 1879, less than two weeks after his wedding, Private Frank Humble is killed while on patrol along the American frontier. Unwilling to accept his death, Dr. Catherine Coldbridge draws on her magical powers to resurrect her beloved husband. Expecting a miracle, Catherine is horrified when Frank returns not as the loving man she remembered but as a bloodthirsty monster. Decades later, Catherine tracks him to a touring show called "Cowboy Dan's Wild West Revue," where he is billed as the Unkillable Frank Lightning. Along with a pair of sharpshooting brothers, Catherine is prepared to finally right the wrong she committed until she realizes Frank is not as monstrous as he originally appeared. Rountree returns to the Weird West world he conjured in his debut, *The Legend of Charlie Fish* (2024). A haunting retelling of *Frankenstein* set against the raw, mythic backdrop of the Wild West, the novel breathes new life into an enduring classic. Perfect for readers who crave reimagined legends and a touch of dark wonder in their Westerns. —*Raychel Bennet*

Volatile Memory.

By Seth Haddon.

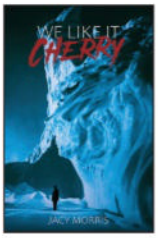
July 2025. 176p. Tor.com, $21.99 (9781250364685); e-book (9781250364692).

When scavenger Wylla gets a ping about expensive tech nearby, she knows she needs to claim it. She's been struggling for too long, eking out an existence and rewriting the data to make sure her true ID as a woman holds. But when she gets the tech—a mask—it's much more than she bargained for. Because it's still attached to a dead woman . . . and the dead woman's mind is now in the mask, with Sable desperate to get revenge on the people who sent her to her death. Some of the technicalities and plot details are a bit hazy, but Haddon has written an intriguing novella for fans of other books about what it means to be both tech and human, and what it means to feel when you're made of metal, as in Annalee Newitz's *Autonomous* (2017). Having a trans protagonist alongside a mind in a mask puts an interesting spin on the question of what it really means to inhabit a body, and many readers will enjoy Sable's righteous female rage. —*Leah von Essen*

We Like It Cherry.

By Jacy Morris.

July 2025. 181p. Tenebrous, paper, $17.99 (9781959790334); e-book (9781959790341).



Morris' queer, Indigenous horror story starts off with the fictitious Winoquin tribe, who hunger for human flesh. Ezra works on a television show that profiles Indigenous communities across North America. He grapples with depression, insecurity, and the pressures of setting a good example for the show's younger fans. He finds new purpose from a man at a festival, who leads him to Baffin Island. Maq, one of the community elders, is their guide for an upcoming celebration with ritualistic elements that depend on conditions being met, including to get as close to the top of a glacier as possible. As the plot progresses, tensions rise. The bodies begin to pile up, and Ezra questions if he will survive. Discovering the significance of "cherry" and why the Winoquin like it is not for the faint of heart. The lengths to which the tribe must go in order to survive are difficult, to say the least. Survival becomes paramount, and readers will race to the end to find out who makes it out alive. Morris' narrative does not pull punches, addressing Indigenous identity, colonization, modern society, and more. Highly recommended, particularly for fans of Stephen Graham Jones, Owl Goingback, and Devon A. Mihesuah. —*A. E. Siraki*

A Witch's Guide to Magical Innkeeping.

By Sangu Mandanna.

July 2025. 336p. Berkley, paper, $19 (9780593439371); e-book (9780593439388).

Sera Swan and her great-aunt Jasmine run a magical inn, visible only to those who truly need it. Fifteen years earlier, teen Sera brought Jasmine back to life with a resurrection spell, which resulted in Sera losing nearly all of her magic and being exiled from the British Guild of Sorcery by her oppressive mentor, Albert Grey. Now 30 and having a hard time keeping the inn intact, she unexpectedly finds herself closer to the spell she needs, only she lacks a translator. Enter handsome Luke Larsen, whose boss at the guild knows that he needs the inn as much as Sera needs him. Luke soon becomes a part of the quirky group that inhabits the inn and supports Sera on her quest to regain her magic and restore equity to the guild. With snappy dialogue and a lot of heart, Mandanna's latest (after *The Very Secret Society of Irregular Witches*, 2022) explores how much pressure we sometimes put on ourselves, the ups and downs of the family we choose, and the importance of using your voice and power to stand up for others. —*Maribeth Fisher*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Witchy romances are all the rage, and Mandanna's cozy, uplifting tale will appeal long after the trend fades.

Graphic Novels

Adult

The Adventures of Lion Man.

By John Jennings and others. Art by David Brame and others.

June 2025. 124p. Rosarium, paper, $19.95 (9798986614670). 741.5.

In this crowdfunded attempt to revive an unfortunately unused Black comic book hero from the Golden Age, Jennings, Brame, and a variety of other creators have crafted a love letter to and celebration of characters that have lapsed into the public domain. In this anthology, creators take turns reimagining Lion Man, a character who predates Marvel's Black Panther by decades, and his sidekick Bubba, as a mystical defender of a dream realm to a highly skilled secret agent and more. The stories vary in narrative style, while Brame provides the wily art, sometimes implementing heavy splashes or a single panel per page. This anthology also includes the original Lion Man story found in *All-Negro Comics,* as well as an assortment of artistically reimagined versions of other Golden Age public domain characters. The "Fantomah" story is particularly strong. This anthology will be of interest to those hoping to support Black creators and characters, as well as to comics historians, but there may just be something of interest to anyone. —*Jack Phoenix*

Gaysians.

By Mike Curato. Art by the author.

June 2025. 384p. Algonquin, $32 (9781643755120). 741.5.

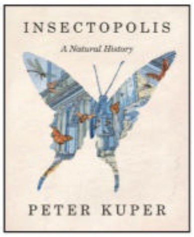
AJ escapes to Seattle so he can come out of the closet, find love, and attend college. Accidentally spilling a drink results in meeting K, a drag queen and community activist extraordinaire. This leads to an introduction to the rest of the "Boy Luck Club," as the group humorously refers to themselves. The core set is rounded out by John, a quiet gamer and web developer whose adoptive parents tried their best to keep Korean culture in his life, and Steven, who left Vietnam at age six and tends the elderly in a nursing home. The four navigate the difficulties and prejudice facing queer Asian Americans, both from inside the gay community and from a homophobic broader society. Set in the early aughts, the vibe is definitely *Queer as Folk* or *Sex in the City* for an Asian American cast, with all the innuendo and sexual frankness that implies. Gorgeous art brings each character to life with their emotional struggles achingly conveyed through posture and expression. Recommended for anyone who wants to see friends survive and support one another. —*Sarah Rice*

Insectopolis: A Natural History.

By Peter Kuper. Art by the author.

2025. 256p. Norton, $35 (9781324035718). 741.5.

Two friends are making their way to an exhibit on insects at the New York Public Library, discussing the history of insects along the way, but neither they nor any other humans will make it there. The curators of the exhibit would be glad to know, however, that their work was not in vain. In the years that follow, a veritable parade of insects takes a journey through the exhibit, providing insight into how humanity has lived alongside, thought about, and learned about insects of all varieties, with the insects providing their own (perhaps accurate!) insights throughout. In Kuper's visual masterpiece, readers embark on a journey across centuries of biology, entomology, environmental science, and cultural studies, among other fields, all of which are given their due, with special care to showcase those often left out of the story, without leaving the reader exhausted. Kuper captures the essence of museum exhibits, with their overwhelming display cases and busts of long-dead researchers, and even incorporates visual references as transitions between sections. The transitions between pages and panels are something special as well, using the weaving, crawling, flittering, and fluttering of the insects themselves as a way to navigate the page. And with an illustrated bibliography that's to die for, this is setting a new high bar for graphic nonfiction. —*Matthew Noe*

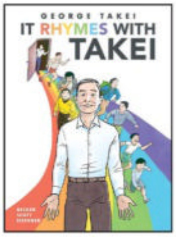


It Rhymes with Takei.

By George Takei and others. Art by Harmony Becker.

June 2025. 336p. Top Shelf, $29.99 (9781603095747). 741.5.

In his thorough and touching graphic memoir, Takei divulges his life story within the context of his struggles with his sexuality. Flashing back and forth between interviews in recent years and detailed recollections of his adolescence and young adulthood, Takei discusses feeling like an actor his whole life, since he remained closeted until he was 68 despite knowing he was gay from a young age. Takei comments on how society pushed him to feel unable to show his true self and that much of his career as an actor was involved with portraying heterosexuality. In his memoir, Takei speaks about this struggle and others, including referencing his childhood experiences of WWII incarceration camps (as told in *They Called Us Enemy*) and academic ventures, switching careers to follow his passion for acting. Takei also discusses his lifelong involvement in activism, since he faced prejudice as a child and continued to see it in his communities his whole life. As Takei realizes the influence he has, he becomes more overtly involved in speaking up about LGBTQ+ issues in addition to other causes he cares about. Becker, who illustrated Takei's earlier memoir, handles the artwork here as well, handily portraying his experiences in naturalistic, expressive linework. This uplifting, encouraging, and inspiring narrative powerfully demonstrates how Takei's lifelong experiences led him to be a voice for those who struggle. —*Vi Kwartler*



Salt Green Death.

By Katarina Thorsen. Art by the author.

2025. 196p. Conundrum, paper, $30 (9781772621068). 741.5.

In a vivid, illustrative interpretation, Thorsen documents the results of her investigation into Joseph O'Dwyer's experience of the Canadian mental health system. Over the course of 15 years, O'Dwyer is subject to increasingly invasive procedures meant to treat his diagnosed schizophrenia, from insulin coma therapy to electroconvulsive treatment to lobotomy, all ultimately harmful and of questionable medical value. Doctors' notes, patient records, family letters, and more litter the pages of this comic, weaving across the years to paint a complex, challenging picture of psychiatric care at the time—and this is just for a single patient; imagine how a map of thousands might look? Fans of graphic medicine will find a lot to love here, including detailed drawings and descriptions of procedures, insights into the fraught history of psychiatric care, and an astonishingly thorough bibliography. Yellowed pages, much like the coloration of archival documents decaying over time, set the tone, while rare pops of color draw attention to *this* moment. This is a testament to curiosity and following the rabbit down the hole, wherever it may lead. —*Matthew Noe*

Young Adult

Beyond They/Them: 20 Influential Nonbinary and Gender-Diverse People You Should Know.

By em dickson. Art by Cameron Mukwa.

2025. 96p. Andrews McMeel, $21.99 (9781524893996). Gr. 8–12. 741.5.

In an understanding and inspiring tone that offers insight into nonbinary and gender-diverse concepts and highlights important figures, dickson introduces a parade of successful nonbinary artists, activists, athletes and more, in profiles accompanied by genial, full-page portraits. While covering the backgrounds and influences of such individuals as Rebecca Sugar, Janelle Monáe, and Jaiyah Saelua, dickson describes each subject's drive toward activism and determination to not only live authentically but demonstrate that authenticity in their careers and projects. In addition to a brief synopsis of each subject's accomplishments, dickson includes quotes

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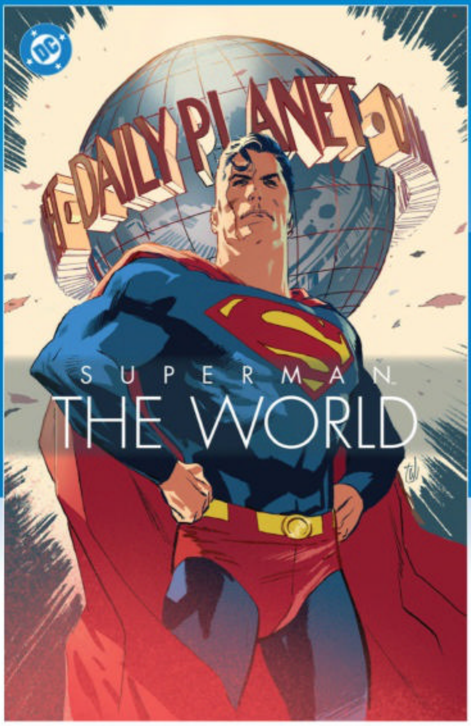
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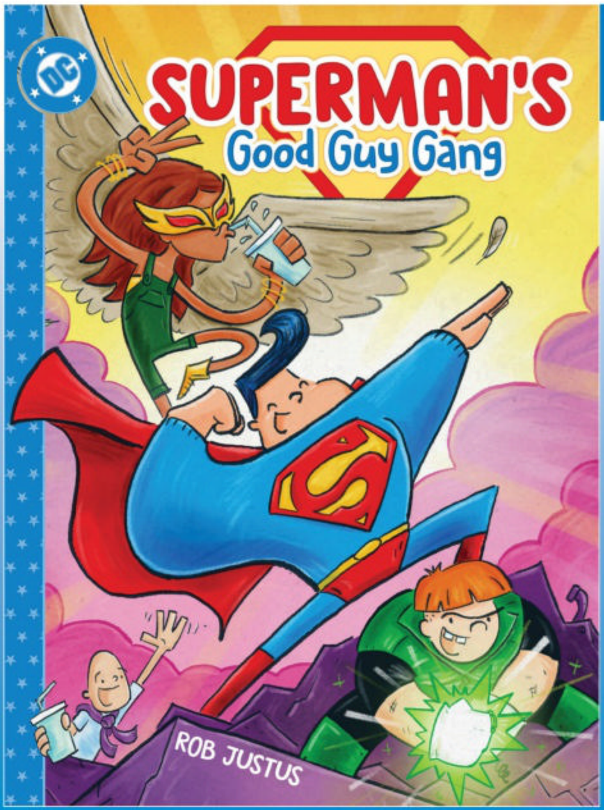
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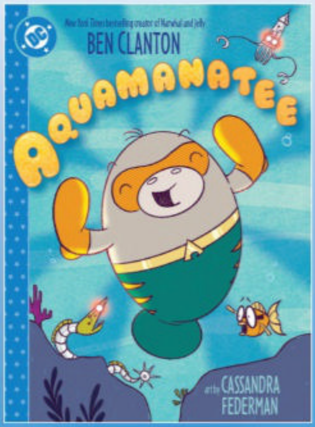
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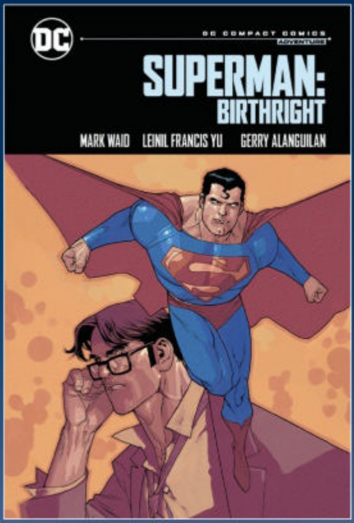
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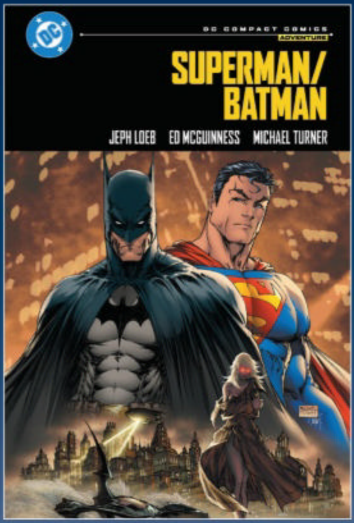
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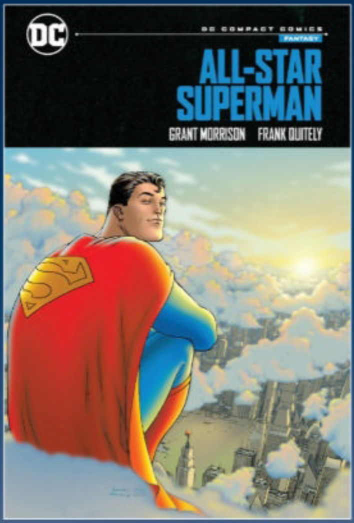
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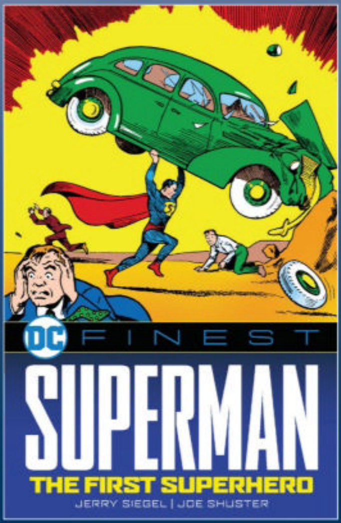
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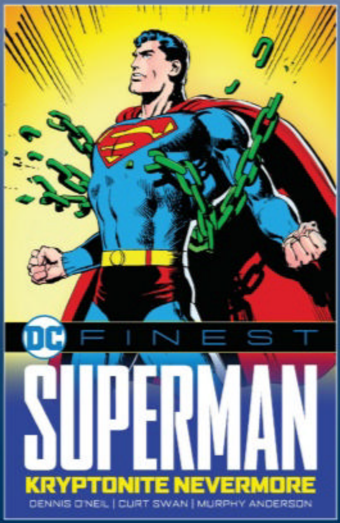
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Continued from p.55

and interviews pertaining to gender or gender expression. This slim, informative volume exemplifies the strength needed to live out and proud and what can be accomplished from tapping into one's true influences and interests and projecting them out to the world. By setting the context in fields like the arts and sports but also politics and activism, dickson showcases the wide variety of ways gender and gender nonconformism plays a role in public life and how figures driven to make change can work together. —*Vi Kwartler*

Girl Crush, v.1.

By Midori Tayama. Art by the author.

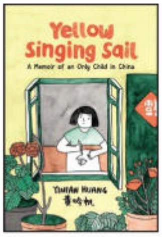
June 2025. 176p. VIZ Media, paper, $11.99 (9781974755851). Gr. 7–12. 741.5.

Perfect for readers who love K-pop, this is a foray into the ultracompetitive world of Korean idols. When Tenka Momose's mother abandoned her family, Tenka became a bitter, angry outcast. That is, until her classmate Harumi inspired her to strive for perfection. But when K-pop-obsessed Erian seems to steal Harumi's heart with her sincerity and determination, Tenka decides she's going to compete with Erian for the thing she wants the most: K-pop stardom. Soon, the two girls are auditioning for spots at a top agency, but for even the super-perfect Tenka, this is a cutthroat arena that demands the best. Filled with energy and the burn of competition, this embraces the dynamism of K-pop's movement and style through bold lines and stylistic composition. Tenka's drive for perfection is simultaneously a strength and a flaw, which makes for a compelling plot. Tenka has a lot to learn about herself and relating to others, making this a great read for teens who may be having their own inner struggle about ambition and friendship. —*Ashley Hawkins*

★ Yellow Singing Sail: A Memoir of an Only Child in China.

By Yinfan Huang. Art by the author.

June 2025. 184p. Kids Can, paper, $16.99 (9781525305511). Gr. 6–9.



A sensitive and imaginative child, Yinyin struggles to navigate changing, often unpredictable or uncomfortable family situations and rigid, often inexplicable expectations at school, even as she dreams of finding genuine friendships and a place of acceptance for her artistic inclinations. Picture-book illustrator Huang presents a tender and thoughtfully crafted graphic memoir of her childhood in 1990s China. Through a poignant series of episodic memories—exulting in the gift of a new mechanical pencil, exploring new spaces during a lonely stretch of summer, expressing individuality by wearing a "rebellious" hairstyle, yearning to be seen by the cool kids from another province—Huang's perfectly curated, sensitive observations of her own varying, deeply felt experiences capture the shifting inner landscape of any child growing up between duty and daydreams. With a somewhat more naive style than she uses for her witty single-panel cartoons for the *New Yorker*, Huang fills her simple linework with washes of blacks, reds, and greens in orderly panels to evoke Yinyin's world: structured, limited, but always minutely observed, emotionally authentic, and often revelatory. Rooted in specific cultural experiences yet reflecting every kid's worries and hopes about feeling safe, finding friends, and feeling comfortable in one's own skin, Huang's honest and vulnerable self-portrait will resonate with tween and upper-middle-grade readers. An impressive and memorable author-illustrator debut from a promising new voice. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

Middle

★ Cat + Crazy, v.1.

By Wataru Nadatani. Art by the author.

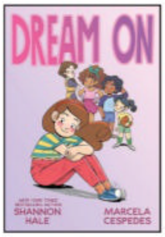
July 2025. 168p. Dark Horse Manga, paper, $12.99 (9781506747088). Gr. 3–12. 741.5.

This hilarious cat comedy manga from the mangaka who created the hit *Cat + Gamer* mixes adorable cat antics with some shonen battle moves and adolescent growing pains to make for an endearing and engaging read. Although Kensuke is obsessed with cats, his family's allergies prevent him from actually having one at home, leaving him with no other way to admire felines but by following around strays outside. When a cat who is especially important to him is in danger, he meets Nekoya Jin, a self-proclaimed cat whisperer who seems to know how to communicate with cats and has developed a cat-centric martial art. Kensuke sets out to learn all he can about connecting with and protecting cats! Ideal for the true cat connoisseur, this manga is defined by Nadatani's impeccably drawn cat illustrations. The frenetic energy of the story is truly enhanced by just how much attention to detail Nadatani includes in his illustrations; his cat expressions especially make this stand out among other cat manga. This is sure to have really wide appeal: with its action elements based around protecting cats and a high cuteness factor, readers from as young as upper elementary school to adults will find enjoyment in this hilarious and heartfelt tale of kitty obsession. —*Ashley Hawkins*

★ Dream On.

By Shannon Hale. Art by Marcela Cespedes and Lark Pien.

Aug. 2025. 240p. Roaring Brook, $22.99 (9781250843067). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.



Mourn not for the thought balloon. It's currently in short supply since comics—particularly superhero comics—have become ever more cinematic, but Hale and Cespedes have reinvented this once-ubiquitous device to support the emotions of their story like a dream. In the form of expressive, disconnected shapes, they float around the eager, imaginative, and sensitive Cassie, deepening her character and making her anxieties and hopes more vibrant and more urgent. And nothing could be more appropriate to this story of Cassie's crowded family, shifting friendships, and transforming perspective. It's the stuff of everyday life for kids Cassie's age, but what could possibly be more important, more anxiety-producing, or more joyous? Cassie experiences all those emotions as she navigates transitions in her school life, her primary friendship, and her family relationships, learning to redefine her expectations, deciding what's worth holding on tight to, discovering unexpected wisdom, and, most significantly, figuring out how her own emotions both help and hinder her. And those magical thought balloons draw readers right into the heart of it. As a companion to her autobiographical *Real Friends* (2017), this will already be on the radar of Hale's many fans, while newcomers can instantly latch onto the themes and the accessibly realistic but enjoyably witty art, filled with recognizable body language and occasional flights of sparkling fancy. Consider multiple copies of this one. —*Jesse Karp*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Hale is one of the biggest names in the middle-grade comics space; any new title from her is cause for celebration.

One Crazy Summer: The Graphic Novel.

By Rita Williams-Garcia. Art by Sharee Miller.

2025. 304p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $24.99 (9780062935595). Gr. 4–8. 741.5.

From Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Book Award–winning author and the author-illustrator of *Curlfriends* comes the graphic-novel adaptation of Williams-Garcia's story about three sisters reuniting with their mother, Cecile, and attending a Black Panther summer camp in 1968. Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern have not seen their mother in seven years when they are sent to California to spend the summer with her. While reconciling vague memories of their mother with the seemingly unfeeling poet housing them is challenging enough, the girls are also navigating the universal experiences of adolescence—like first crushes and competitive friends—against a backdrop of societal, racial, and familial tensions. Delphine is struck by the conflicting images of Black Panthers in the media versus the Black Panthers serving them free breakfast every morning. Racial slurs and curse words are present, though indicated with symbols, and the illustrations depict the death of

Bobby Hutton. Perfect for pairing with the original work or as an alternative for readers who struggle with full-text novels. An important coming-of-age story about social justice, community, family, and forgiveness. —*Emerald Martinez*

Children's

Duck and Cat Ride the Riverboat.

By Drew Panckeri. Art by the author.

June 2025. 40p. Holiday, $14.99 (9780823460519).
K–Gr. 2. 741.5.

New Yorker contributor Panckeri plies his skills in single-panel cartooning in this debut early reader comic. Two best friends board a riverboat for a leisurely outing—at least, that's Duck's plan. Cat, ever skeptical, is wary. When the cook abandons ship to paddle a seasick performer to shore, the passengers are left without entertainment—or dinner. Unnerved by the hungry side-eye of a family of crocodiles, the friends scramble: Duck puts on a frantic show, while Cat hustles making gumbo. As Duck wilts, the crocs lick their chops, but a steaming pot finally arrives, restoring goodwill. Plump, expressive characters outlined in rounded black lines are filled with a pleasant palette of teals, grays, and warm roses. Clever details add humor and fun—mom croc's visor over her mop of auburn curls, dad croc's gold medallion and polo shirt—and the odd-couple pals are portrayed with distinctive panache: Duck rocks a tiny bowler, while Cat sports a checked scarf. This fun, single-joke tale of the perils of hanging out with hangry folks adds to the pantheon of comic animal pairs—best read after a snack. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

Little Mouse Saves The Day!

By Jeff Smith. Art by Jeff Smith and Tom Gaadt.

June 2025. 40p. TOON, $13.99 (9781662665455).
PreS–Gr. 1. 741.5.

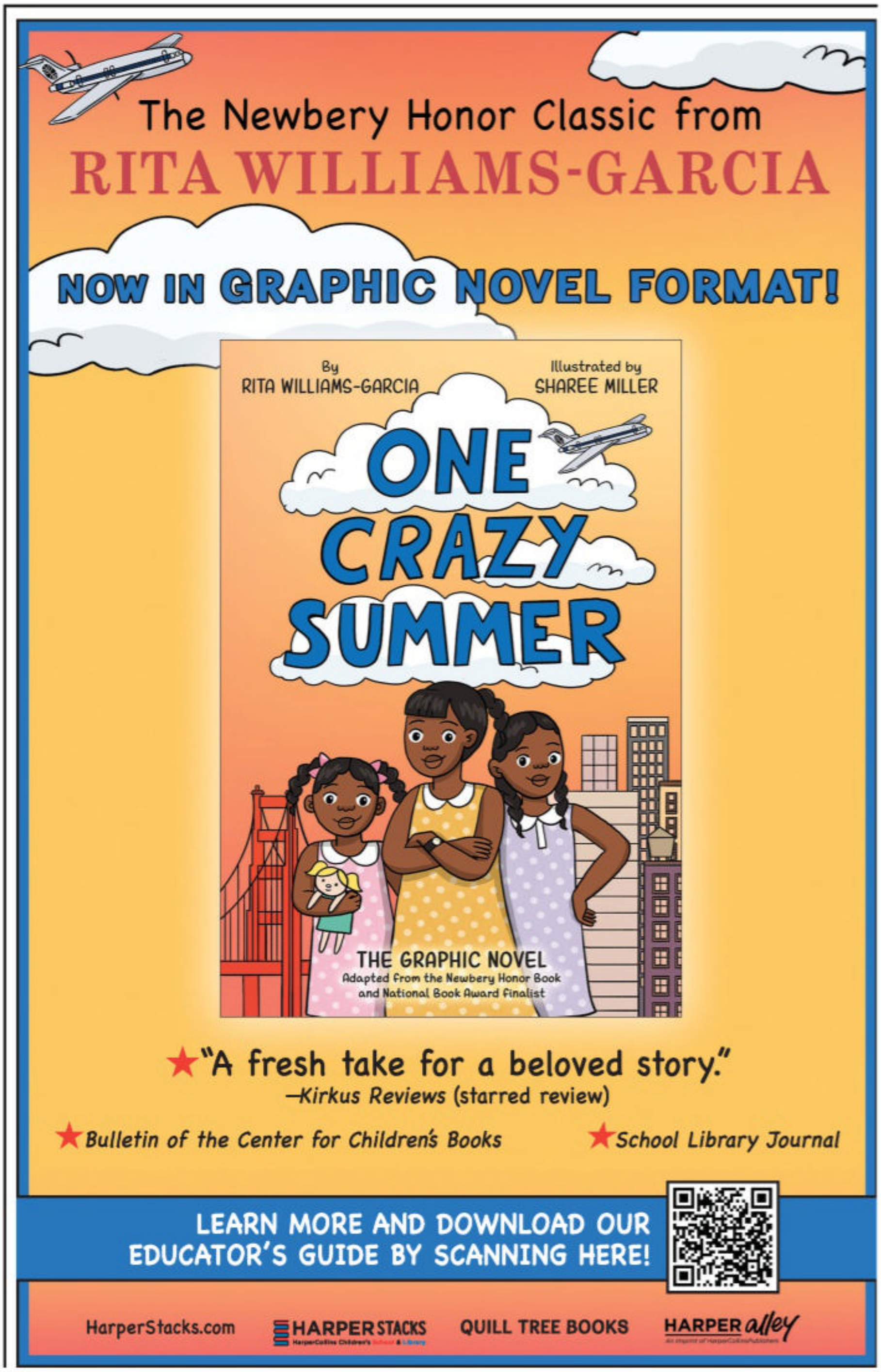
Little Mouse got dressed in Smith's first early reader comic (*Little Mouse Gets* Ready, 2009), and this time the adorable rodent is getting ready for bed, removing his Supermouse cape and settling down to sleep when he spots something eerie in his closet. He's scared, but putting his red cape back on helps him find the bravery to investigate the shadow shape himself. Smith's graceful ink lines with meticulous cross hatching do a superb job of capturing emotion in small moments. Being spooked by a shadow at night is an experience most kids can relate to, and the gentle story emphasizes that bravery doesn't mean you stop being scared—it's very clear that Little Mouse is still scared, but choosing to face his fears is what saves the day. Rich, saturated colors and large format panels (no more than two per page and often just one) have more depth than those in a typical early reader comic, but their scale makes them roomy enough for emerging readers to easily discern key actions and emotions. —*Sarah Hunter*

Pickle on Wheels.

By Sylvie Kantorovitz.

June 2025. 40p. illus. Holiday, $14.99 (9780823460304).
K–Gr. 2. 741.5.

Pickle's favorite superhero is a keen roller-skater, so Pickle is thrilled to receive a pair of his own. Only, roller-skating is much harder than he thought. One way-too-fast trip down a slope later and Pickle is feeling sheepish until his friend Coco offers to help him learn. When Pickle, now smoothly skating on his own, runs into another friend struggling to learn to skate, he passes on the kindness Coco showed him and helps his friend practice some basic skating moves. Kantorovitz nicely captures the motion of the many skaters in her large, inviting panels filled with stylish cartoon characters, which smoothly communicate key actions and emotions of the story, from Pickle's shaky knees to Coco's confident little spin. Clear fonts with lots of white space will be approachable for emerging readers, and the overall message—not only of the importance of resilience but the benefits of sharing newfound skills and interests with friends—is a particularly welcome one for the age group. A fun surprise in the closing pages is a delightful flourish on an already charming package. —*Sarah Hunter*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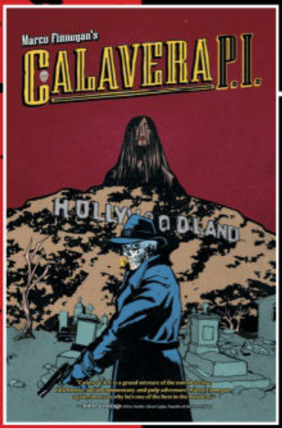
NEW IN HORROR, SCI-FI, AND FANTASY FROM ONI PRESS

MEAT EATERS
Meredith McClaren

July 2025
9781637157923

By Meredith McClaren

The undead are unalive and unwell as nineteen-year-old Ashley Moore wakes up from her murder to discover she's without a heartbeat . . . and with a disturbing craving for fresh—preferably bloody—meat.


Marco Finnegan's
CALAVERA P.I.
HOLLYWOODLAND

September 2025
9781637158463

By **Marco Finnegan**

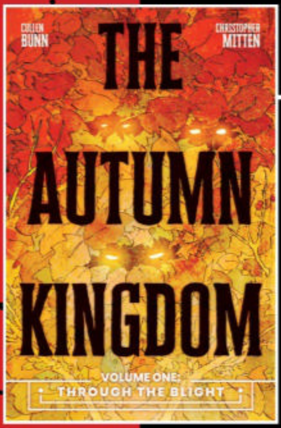
Straddle the blood-soaked boundaries between the living and the dead as a resurrected private eye returns on Día de los Muertos to help a former colleague . . . and solve the mystery of his own murder in the process.

LITTLE VISITOR
& OTHER ABDUCTIONS
Adam Szym

September 2025
9781637157961

By **Adam Szym**

Enter the dreamlike and disturbing realms of extraterrestrial abduction in this uncanny trilogy of graphic novellas for fans of all things beyond our understanding.


CULLEN BUNN
CHRISTOPHER MITTEN
THE AUTUMN KINGDOM
VOLUME ONE:
THROUGH THE BLIGHT

September 2025
9781637158388

Written by **Cullen Bunn**
Illustrated by
Christopher Mitten

A deathly dark fairy tale awaits sisters Sommer and Winter when their idyllic family vacation in the woods morphs into mythical terror.

MINE IS A LONG
LONESOME GRAVE

December 2025
9781637158821

Written by **Justin Jordan**
Illustrated by **Chris Shehan**
& Maan House

If can't have peace, at least he can have revenge. . . . Harley has only seven days to find and kill his unseen enemy, and he is coming for them all.

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Art from *Planetes Deluxe Edition, v.1.*, by Makoto Yukimura

Adult

Model Five Murder: A Sci-Fi Noir.

By Tan Juan Gee. Art by the author.

June 2025. 64p. Silver Sprocket, paper, $15.99 (9798886200706). 741.5.

When Io, a sentient Rohm Model Five cyborg, sees a being that looks just like him floating dead in space, he returns to his home space station with questions. Io is supposed to be one of only eleven Model Fives, and this one was a private investigator. Io decides to investigate this mystery robot's origins—and its subsequent demise—but what he ultimately uncovers is a corporate conspiracy that puts his life in danger. This brief story perfectly lives up to its subtitle—"a sci-fi noir"—as a suspenseful, fast-paced, and gritty crime and sf blend with a plot that is easy to follow, even amid the world building and space setting. The artwork appears in black-and-white with blue-gray accents, and the characters' expressions are clearly visible throughout and enhanced with features like sweat beads. Due to the brevity of the work and the blend of speculative and realistic fiction, this volume will appeal to first-time graphic novel readers who might be hesitant to commit to reading something longer or more text-heavy. Bonus content at the end helps detail the author's process in writing a graphic work. —*Suzanne Temple*

Muted.

By Miranda Mundt. Art by the author.

July 2025. 320p. Ten Speed, $29.99 (9780593836798). 741.5.

Camille Severin is anxious. She's come of age and can complete the blood ritual the Severin family is known for with her cousin and best friend, Avaline, but Camille has always worried that something might go wrong if she does—and she's right. While her sigil is perfectly executed, the demon that starts to emerge to grant her wish is far more botanical than expected, so she plays dumb, pretending she wrote the sigils incorrectly. Frustrated with Camille's seeming failure, family matriarch Aunt Athalie leaves Camille at the Severin mansion in rural Louisiana while Avaline and Athalie return to New Orleans. Now, Camile gets time with her cousin Silvia—time to learn about the other witch families and to digest the tragic fire from childhood that orphaned her. Mundt's incredibly popular WEBTOON adapts well to the GN format, with a distinct style that sits between serious and silly and stunning full-page panels that drive the story. This series starter will please standing fans with bonus content and surely create new ones of those who enjoy new adult modern fantasy. —*Kelly Ferreira*

Second Shift.

By Kit Anderson. Art by the author.

June 2025. 160p. Avery Hill, paper, $18.99 (9781917355209). 741.5.

Anderson's first full-length graphic novel travels to "outposts" created and run by "TERRACORP® for LIFE!" Birdie's shift is just starting with a reminder that she's "part of an incredible story . . . a long chain of heroic pioneers . . . making worlds out of nothing." Birdie processes asteroids and comets, aided by "Station," an AI guardian/companion ("it's always there to entertain, comfort, and teach you"). Birdie's brother, Heck, shares her same shift. As Birdie readies, a just-returning coworker warns about "storms, debris, malfunctions, you name it." Birdie tracks Heck away from the base, culminating in an unforeseen adventure. Heck wants to explore further; Birdie's more hesitant. What they discover is far from reality—or is it? Ignatz-nominated Anderson color-codes Birdie in rusty red, Heck usually in blue, to keep them distinctly articulated as individuals. She draws with thick outlines, mostly maintaining distinct panels shaded in reddish browns, blues, and greens with hand-lettered bubble texts; chapters are interrupted by stark Terracorp messaging in white on a black background. The seemingly rigid format could suggest attempted control of the unknown—despite being an unlikely possibility. —*Terry Hong*

Simplicity.

By Mattie Lubchansky. Art by the author.

July 2025. 272p. Pantheon, $29 (9780593701126). 741.5.

A school group—all fashionably uniformed in shades of purple—are touring a museum in Lubchansky's vision of a not-so-distant future. "This is our history," the teacher insists. Pivotal events began in 2081—40 years after the "Great Dissolution" of 2041 disbanded the U.S.—when city contractor Lucius Pasternak arrived in isolated "Simplicity" to conduct an anthropological field study. He's welcomed by acolyte Amity Crown-Shy; their connection is muted but immediate. From daily communal farming to nightly "Mutual Rite" (emotional, physical, sexual) release sessions, Lucius finds Simplicity's way of life "alien" yet is increasingly reluctant to leave. When bizarre, vicious murders escalate, Amity and Lucius must find who—or what—is involved, but discovering the truth will have irreparable consequences. Lubchansky presents her riotous, fantastical dystopia in vibrant full-color illustrations that often cleverly show more than text bubbles might tell: purple signals possible (insidious) danger, scars reveal true identities, police brutality hasn't disappeared in the future. Audiences are gifted glimpses of what really happened, but official history undoubtedly will belong to the (purple-clad) victors. —*Terry Hong*

The Wrestler.

By John Kenn Mortensen. Art by the author.

June 2025. 80p. Fantagraphics, $22.99 (9798875001123). 741.5.

The Sledgehammer has never faced defeat in the wrestling ring, and even after being out of the ring for 25 years, he isn't about to start now. Unfortunately for him, what he is about to face is a lot more than your typical gimmicked-up wrestling bout. Mortensen's latest tells the tale of a down-and-out alcoholic wrestler who loves his estranged daughter and is about to learn the hard way that, in the end, debts always come due. Mortensen's illustrations here are reminiscent of Edward Gorey in their dark, scratched lines, but they have a sense of gothic macabre all his own. Using the affordances of comics—beautiful two-page spreads, unique panel layouts—the tale unfolds through a series of memories, as The Sledgehammer has to remember just what led to him being hailed as invincible. Equal parts old-gods myth and indie wrestling (complete with color commentary), this will delight fans of classic horror comics and bring a smile to wrestling fans alike. —*Matthew Noe*

Young Adult

The Hazards of Love Book 2: As Above, So Below.

By Stan Stanley. Art by the author.

2025. 336p. Oni, paper, $19.99 (9781637154892). Gr. 10–12. 741.5.

Amparo, aka Fawn, continues their quest to try to leave Bright World, but this time, on the other side of the realms, their love interest, Iolanthe, is also working to bring them back home with the help of a medium named Al. Iolanthe and Al find allies among the dead—victims of El Ciervo, the terrible "doctor" keeping Fawn captive who preys upon humans in Bright World and terrorizes the otherworldly creatures in this supernatural realm. Fawn hatches a scheme and brings together their scarce allies in trying to discover El Ciervo's past while also

Continued on p.64

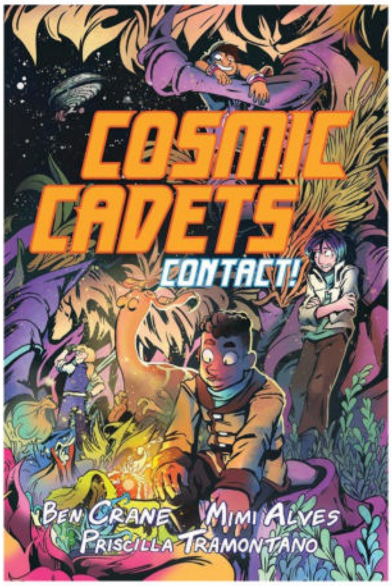
Art by Shawn Harris, from *The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza*, by Mac Barnett.

Booklist Essentials

Middle-Grade Space Adventures

by Sarah Hunter

From the silly (cats on the moon! An adorable pup who travels on a rainbow beam!) to the heartfelt (smart and capable kids proving to their parents they can handle anything, even a deep-space engineering crisis) to the quietly weird (talking stars; interstellar mail delivery), the following sf adventures will satisfy a range of space-obsessed middle-graders looking for soaring imagination and inventive world-building in an intergalactic package.



Astronautical! By Brooklin Stormie. Art by the author. 2025. 248p. Annick, paper (9781773219424). Gr. 3–6.

Brothers Max and Lari are on a mission to rescue their father amid the floating pieces of their exploded planet, but in the course of their journey, Lari starts exhibiting some oddly celestial behavior. The *Adventure Time*–like energy is well matched by the bold, blocky artwork, which sharply captures the darkness of space and the weirdness of the creatures the brothers encounter.

Billie Blaster and the Robot Army from Outer Space. By Laini Taylor. Art by Jim Di Bartolo and WK Sahadewa. 2023. 208p. Abrams/Amulet (9781419753848). Gr. 2–5.

Genius kid inventor Billie faces the consequences of her own actions when she gets a visit from an intergalactic robot with a message: Earth is about to be invaded by aliens with the help of a robot army that Billie invented. Witty, wacky art and a lively sf setting match the breakneck pace of the plot.

Blake Laser. By Keith Marantz and Larissa Brown. Art by Larissa Brown. 2024. 240p. HarperAlley (9780063009677). Gr. 3–7.

Blake Laser's parents are too busy working at the Interplanetary Space Control Center to notice that she's a bona fide scientific prodigy, but when they're captured while investigating an anomaly, Blake uses her wits and incredible inventions to rescue them.

Cosmic Cadets: Contact! By Ben Crane. Art by Andy Alves and Priscilla Tramontano. 2023. 160p. Top Shelf, paper (9781603095204). Gr. 4–7.

Jimmil, son of the spaceship captain,

has stumbled across a new alien race that communicates through feelings. But when the adults on the ship worry that the aliens are dangerous, it causes a big misunderstanding—can Jimmil smooth things over? Classic space-adventure tropes are boldly realized in Alves' and Tramontano's stylish artwork.

The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza. By Mac Barnett. Art by Shawn Harris. 2022. 320p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen, (9780063084087). Gr. 2–5.

When evil rats from outer space begin eating Earth's moon, the only answer is to blast a cat in a space suit up there to deal with them. There's visual and tonal comedy in every panel of this gag-filled collaboration from two picture-book superstars.

Grace Needs Space! By Benjamin A. Wilgus. Art by Rii Abrego. 2023. 208p. Random/RH Graphic (9780593182390). Gr. 3–6.

This classic middle-grade plot of a kid being underestimated by their parent is thrillingly set on a space station and Saturn's moon Titan. Wilgus seamlessly incorporates space science into his high-concept plot about long-term space habitation and the nail-biting stakes when things go wrong.

Mr. Corbett Is in Orbit! By Dan Gutman. Art by Jim Paillot. 2021. HarperAlley (9780062947628). Gr. 2–5.

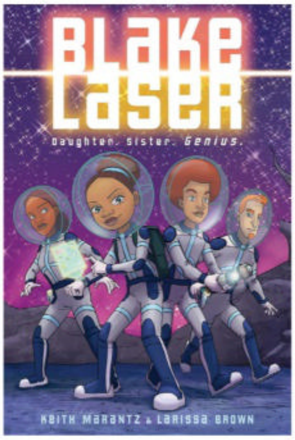
In this My Weird School graphic novel, the students from Ella Mentry find themselves accidentally launched into space while on a field trip at NASA. All the breakneck humor readers could expect from My Weird School is here, alongside goofy but stylized visuals.

Mr. Muffins, v.1: Defender of the Stars. By Ben Kahn. Art by Georgeo Brooks. 2025. 168p. Oni, paper (9781620108321). Gr. 3–6.

When the galaxy needs a champion, who do you turn to? A cheerful corgi named Mr. Muffins, of course. Mr. Muffins and his person, Reuben, travel to another galaxy to protect an alien race from ruin in this comic that playfully blends comedy and space-battle action.

Once upon a Space-Time! By Jeffrey Brown. Art by the author. 2020. 256p. Crown (9780553534351). Gr. 3–6.

In the year 2216, humans are finally ready for galactic space travel, and since "adult humans can be pretty whiny," it's up to two kids to travel with the aliens on a research mission to Mars. The high jinks continue in *A Total Waste of Space-Time* (2021).



From the author of the New York Times bestselling Jedi Academy series
ONCE UPON A SPACE-TIME!
JEFFREY BROWN

STANISLAW LEM'S
THE SEVENTH VOYAGE
NEIL GAIMAN
A GRAPHIC NOVEL BY
JON J MUTH

The Postman from Space. By Guillaume Perreault. Art by the author. Tr. by Françoise Bui. 2020. 144p. Holiday, (9780823445196). Gr. 3–5.

Bob, an interplanetary postal worker, spends his days affably hopping from planet to quirky planet, but a new route makes him feel nervous. This quiet, low-key adventure features vivid, delightfully unusual artwork, and the story continues in a second volume, *Biker Bandits* (2021).

Rover and Speck: This Planet Rocks! By Jonathan Roth. Art by the author. 2022. 104p. Kids Can/KCP (9781525305665). Gr. 2–4.

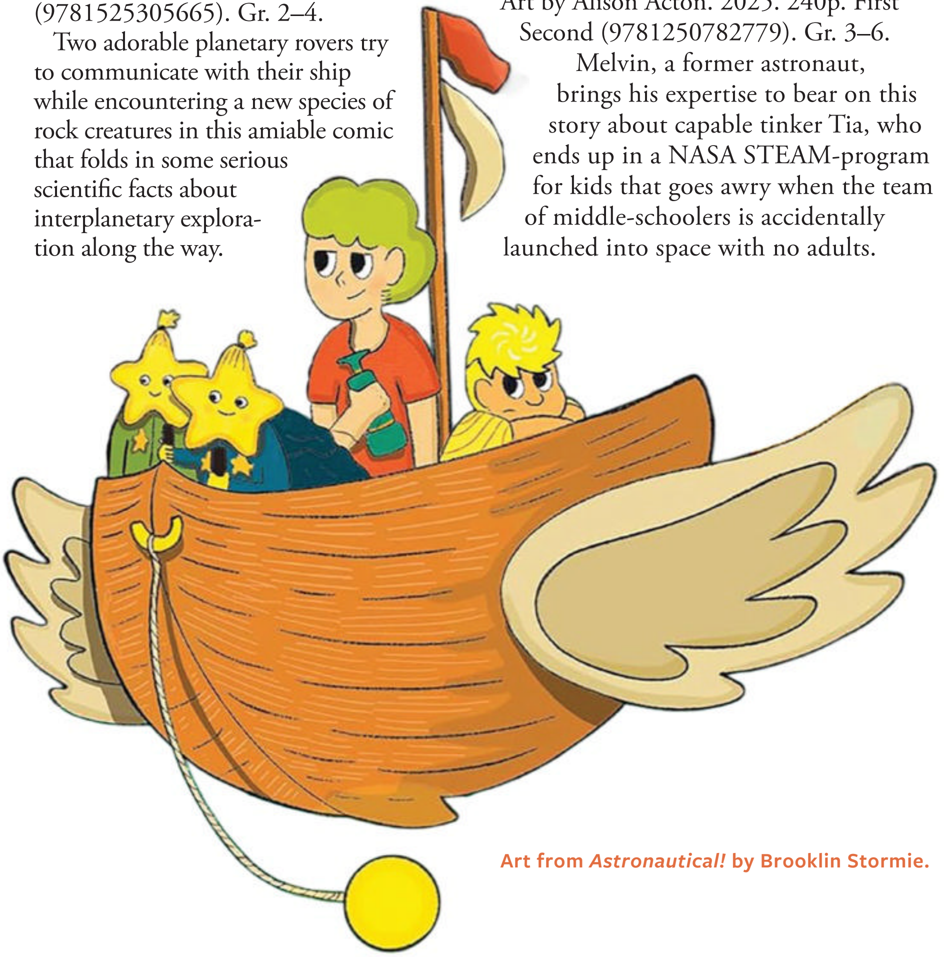
Two adorable planetary rovers try to communicate with their ship while encountering a new species of rock creatures in this amiable comic that folds in some serious scientific facts about interplanetary exploration along the way.

The Seventh Voyage. By Stanisław Lem. Art by Jon J Muth. Tr. by Michael Kandel. 2019. 80p. Scholastic/Graphix (9780545004626). Gr. 4–7.

Muth's inventive, atmospheric watercolor illustrations give this artful adaptation of Lem's tale of a lone astronaut dealing with a broken ship and a gravitational vortex a sophisticated feel that doesn't detract from the quiet comedy or interstellar setting.

Space Chasers by Leland Melvin. By Leland Melvin and Joe Caramagna. Art by Alison Acton. 2025. 240p. First Second (9781250782779). Gr. 3–6.

Melvin, a former astronaut, brings his expertise to bear on this story about capable tinker Tia, who ends up in a NASA STEAM-program for kids that goes awry when the team of middle-schoolers is accidentally launched into space with no adults.



Art from *Astronautical!* by Brooklin Stormie.

MANGA ESSENTIALS

Frequently Requested Horror

by Sara Smith

There must be something programmed into our DNA that makes us love to be scared. Readers can't seem to get enough scary books, so here are some frequently requested horror manga, categorized by subgenre, that will keep readers screeching.

Battle Royale:

Alice in Borderland. By Haro Aso. Art by the author. VIZ Media. Adult

High-schooler Arisu and others are transported into a hellscape known as Borderland, where they must participate in twisted games and continuously risk their lives. Aso's illustrations are outlandish and often disturbing in this brutally vicious psychological thriller.

Deadman Wonderman. By Jinsei Kataoka. Art by Kazuma Kondou. VIZ Media. Gr. 9–12.

This is a decent replacement for those who can't get *Alice in Borderland*; Ganta is a teen who was falsely accused of murdering his entire class but who has a terrifying power. He's sent to a supermax prison with other prisoners who also have deadly powers, and they're all forced to participate in depraved games to entertain viewers.

Crime drama:

Death Note: Black Edition. By Tsugumi Ohba. Art by Takeshi Obata. VIZ Media. Gr. 10–12.

Intelligent Light has many post–high school prospects. Then, a god of death gifts him a powerful notebook—he can write out who and how someone will die. He decides to rid the world of evil, but soon the police and a Holmesian detective are on his case. Much of the psychological-thriller part of this series is the cat-and-mouse chase.

Tokyo Ghoul. By Sui Ishida. Art by the author. VIZ Media. Gr. 10–12.

After a terrible accident left Ken Kaneki in need of an organ transplant, doctors unknowingly used organs from a ghoul. Kaneki must hide what he is from his best friend while fighting against deadly ghoul hunters who believe he's a monster. This is a timeless staple of manga collections with plenty of fodder for philosophical discussions.

Exorcism:

Blue Exorcist. By Kazue Kato. Art by the author. VIZ Media. Gr. 9–12.

Rin may be the son of Satan himself, but he has shunned his lineage. He enrolls in Blue Cross Academy to become an exorcist and learn how to not lose himself to his demonic side. Some of the demons are a little menacing and there's plenty of action throughout the series, so this is a little less scary than others.

D. Gray-man. By Katsura Hoshino. Art by the author. VIZ Media. Gr. 9–12.

At a young age, Allen Walker was conscripted to fight the Millennium Earl, a force of evil trying to bring about the end of the world. Allen was blessed (and cursed) with tools embedded into his body: perfect for being an exorcist. This series has some disturbing monsters and some bloodshed on the page, but those moments are less frequent than in other horror series.

Body Horror:

Uzumaki. By Junji Ito. Art by the author. VIZ Media. Gr. 10–12.

Kirie and her boyfriend, Shuichi, live in a town that is cursed by spirals. In a collection that reads similarly to Ito's short stories until the culminating final chapters intertwine all of the plotlines and themes, the teens continuously escape dizzying horrors and bizarre creatures that twist and transform due to the town's scourge. True to many of Ito's works, one story contains a few panels of non-sexual nudity.

All Ages:

Creepy Cat. By Cotton Valent. Art by the Author. Seven Seas. Gr. 5–12.

Flora inherits a Victorian mansion, complete with ghosts and a creepy cat that can multiply indefinitely, interact with ghosts, and endlessly surprise her. This is illustrated in color, and consists mostly of four-panel yonkoma comics for a lighter narrative style.

Continued from p.61

trying to find a way out of this nightmare. Stanley's stunningly bold art continues to impress, and in this volume, Stanley incorporates many other expressive illustration styles to denote character memories, show the separate realms, and convey diverse emotions. The beautiful Spanish dialogue woven throughout the story immerses readers in the rich cultural fabric of Stanley's creation, which will leave a lasting impression. This story is wildly fantastical, celebratory of diverse gender expression, righteously vengeful, and plentifully dark and twisty. *—Sara Smith*

★ Love, Misha.

By Askel Aden. Art by the author.

June 2025. 320p. First Second, $25.99 (9781250866226); paper, $17.99 (9781250866219). Gr. 7–12. 741.5.

Teen Misha and their mom, Audrey, are going on a road trip together. It's an unassuming premise, until the nuance settles in: Misha is aching for their mom to do better at acknowledging their nonbinary identity, and Audrey wants to bond with her child, since she doesn't live with Misha and is not their primary caretaker. These strained desires from both parties make the trip all the more challenging, with communication snafus and generational divides galore. En route to an old castle, the two get lost in the woods, and as they exit, the world is not what it once was—they've entered the Realm of Spirits, with no return to the mortal realm in sight. The wolfish spirit Odun offers them help finding their way back, but Odun harbors his own secrets, seemingly leading them further and further away from their desired return. Aden's magical graphic novel channels the likes of *Spirited Away* and has a similar energy to the spirit world featured in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, with a bit more teen angst. Aden's character design is thoughtful and creative, from mysterious mushroom spirits to little sprites that provide entertainment along the way. Drenched in golden hues, this adventure captures the nuance of strained familial relationships with ease and speaks well to how the adults in a teen's life may genuinely care but can nonetheless fail them and need to take ownership of those failures. *—Kelly Ferreira*

★ Planetes Deluxe Edition, v.1.

By Makoto Yukimura. Art by the author.

July 2025. 528p. Dark Horse Manga, $49.99 (9781506750149). Gr. 9–12. 741.5.

One of the most highly acclaimed sci-fi manga of all time has been reprinted in a fantastic new hardcover edition. Set in the year 2075, *Planetes* follows the crew of the *DS-12 Toy Box*, which has been tasked with cleaning up the mess left behind from years of space travel. This dangerous cleanup job is necessary to prevent horrifying accidents, such as the one that killed crew member Yuri's wife. Amid the hard work, the crew must contend with the rough living conditions in space, ecoterrorists wreaking havoc, and the trauma that comes from work in extreme conditions. Gorgeous, contemplative, and painstakingly well-done, Yukimura's work is perhaps more resonant now than ever. The characters contend with the complexity of humanity's place in the universe, and Yukimura manages to depict this complexity in ways that are incredibly grounded in reality while also artfully incorporating moments of fantastical psychological contemplation. Although this manga is sci-fi, the core themes and struggles are so relatable: Yuri struggles with the loss of his wife. Fee is a working mom whose maternal instincts come out regularly. Hachi pushes so hard to surpass his father that his actions have the potential to undo his future. *Planetes* is laden with depths to explore and is an essential title for manga collections. —*Ashley Hawkins*

Middle

The Bizarre Bazaar: Mirror Town.

By Daniel Nayeri. Art by Liz Enright.

July 2025. 144p. Little, Brown Ink, $24.99 (9780759556423). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

In the setup for this "tale passing strange" (the series' tagline), the reader plays a customer wandering into the Bizarre Bazaar, an antique shop crowded with objects from "every story." As two bickering, seemingly human employees greet you—looking off-page, directly at the reader ("Yes. I can see you. Hi.")—they lead you to a large mirror, an item that kicks off this installment's featured story. In small-town Texas, young Abel has confidence issues, an unrequited crush, a long-gone father, and a mom overburdened with work shifts. After a peculiar old neighbor gifts him a large mirror, he stumbles into it—and through it, to a mirror dimension of his regular world. In this version of the world, Abel has everything he ever wanted, but when the dream turns into a nightmare, he must find a way out. It's a successfully creepy tale that steadily builds tension till the end, though the proceedings are lightened by Enright's brightly filled, approachably rounded artwork. A promising start to a *Twilight Zone*–like new series for the early-middle-grade lot. —*Ronny Khuri*

Deeply Dave.

By Michael Grover. Art by the author.

June 2025. 240p. Holt, $14.99 (9781250331038). Gr. 3–6. 741.5.

Dave is searching for his missing mother at the bottom of the ocean. As he travels deeper and deeper, he encounters different creatures warning him of an ominous presence referred to as the Big Doom, including a very helpful crustacean named Amos, until he finally finds her ship. Once on board the eerily abandoned ship, he looks for signs of his mother. In the ship's log, he finds old footage of his mother studying an extraterrestrial life-form in captivity, but where is she now? With the help of his new friends, Dave keeps searching for his mother while learning more about the Big Doom. Grover's playful cartoon artwork in an appropriately dark palette is a great match for the adventurous undersea mystery, which comes with plenty of deep belly laughs thanks to Amos, his pet shark, and an octopus occupying a human skeleton. Fans of the off-kilter humor of Dav Pilkey's *Dog Man* (2021) will appreciate this elegantly executed sf adventure with a sweet dose of genuine emotion at its core. —*Jonathan Khan*

Jazzy the Witch in Broom Doom.

By Jessixa Bagley. Art by the author.

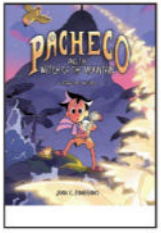
July 2025. 232p. Simon & Schuster, $14.99 (9781665922326). Gr. 3–7. 741.5.

Gentle witchy vibes abound in this comic about a young witch who's trying to follow her own path. Jazzy's not that excited to practice flying on a broomstick; her moms and grandma run the town broommaker and are a little *too* eager for her to start flying. A top-tier procrastinator, Jazzy keeps finding reasons to skip flying practice, especially when she discovers her true passion: bikes! Jazzy cobbles together a bike from broken parts and secretly spends her time riding all over town, but there's a supermoon in a few weeks, and Jazzy's class is supposed to fly their brooms in a parade in celebration. Can Jazzy learn to fly in time? Bagley's soft, invitingly cartoonish artwork nicely expresses emotional turns alongside lots of playful detail and imaginative world building. Though she folds in some real folklore about brooms and witchcraft, Bagley keeps the story centered in relatable middle-grade concerns, such as cultivating passions, being honest with family, and finding the confidence to proudly do something different. Ideal for middle-graders who love witches but shy away from scary stories. —*Sarah Hunter*

★ Pacheco and the Witch of the Mountain.

By Juan E. Zambrano. Art by the author.

June 2025. 176p. Andrews McMeel, $21.99 (9781524892227). Gr. 5–8. 741.5.



Ranging from cozy cottage magic to epic duels and transformation, this debut graphic novel will bring delight and promote authenticity while warning against the fallacy of appealing to tradition. Pacheco, who comes from a line of fishermen, has been taught to fear the witches that live in the distance, but he can't help but admire the lights coming from their tower and dream of practicing magic himself, though boys are forbidden from it. Seeking help for his family, Pacheco bursts into a cottage belonging to Doris, the exiled Witch of the Mountain, who cares for the jungle's magical creatures and who reluctantly takes him on as her apprentice. While Pacheco has longed to enter the world of magic, he must face the prejudiced traditions that plague the island's magical law, which preys upon magical creatures, forbids the use of magic by those considered impure, and is led by a council on a literal witch hunt to root out unregulated magic. Brightly colored and entrancing illustrations will appeal to fans of Raúl the Third, Molly Knox Ostertag's *The Witch Boy* (2017), and Disney's *Luca*. Nods to the author's Venezuelan heritage are peppered throughout. Pacheco's journey asks whether any ruling group has the right to dictate who we are and how we live as ourselves. A timely and magical exploration of identity and social constructs that pushes back against harmful traditions and rhetoric and encourages community, growth, and empathy at a time when we all need it. —*Emerald Martinez*

Children's

Yelp Yeti! Chaos in Kathmandu.

By Sneha Pradhan. Art by Promina Shrestha.

June 2025. 64p. Flying Eye, paper, $12.99 (9781838742256). K–Gr. 4. 741.5.

Dev and his cat, Tuna, live in Kathmandu with his parents and grandma. It's the beginning of summer, and he can't wait to spend a month away from school eating sweet mangoes, enjoying sleepovers with his cousins, and playing games of cricket with his friends. However, when he spots a yeti roaming the streets, things take a turn for the worse. The yeti makes an uninvited visit to Dev's house, where it creates a complete mess, leaving Dev to blame. When Dev tries to explain to his parents and grandma that the yeti made the mess, they don't believe him. If he doesn't get it together, he'll be spending his summer with strict Ranu Aunty, away from everything he was looking forward to. Can Dev track down and capture the yeti in order to prove his innocence? Or will his summer be completely ruined? Pradhan and Shrestha's beautiful picture-book-like comic pulses with warm illustrations of softly rounded characters in a saturated palette. Dev's frustration with being blamed for the yeti's messes will surely resonate with elementary-school readers. —*Jonathan Khan*

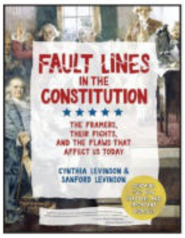
Youth Nonfiction

Older Readers

★ Fault Lines in the Constitution: The Framers, Their Fights, and the Flaws That Affect Us Today, 3rd ed.

By Cynthia Levinson and Sanford Levinson.

July 2025. 320p. illus. Peachtree, paper, $18.99 (9781682638040). Gr. 6–10. 342.73.



When the Levinsons first introduced *Fault Lines in the Constitution* in 2017, it instantly became a go-to resource for its comprehensive and accessible treatment of the Constitution. Following an introduction to the preamble that explains how weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation led to a stronger Constitution, topical chapters encompass such wide-ranging subjects as presidential vetoes, gerrymandering, the electoral college, and habeas corpus. Controversial news events and court cases kick off each discussion, which links history with modern-day interpretations of the Constitution. Flashbacks help readers understand the framers' intent and concerns related to democracy as well as the Constitution's successes and failures. Because events in the U.S. are always evolving, this third edition includes new material related to the 2024 election and Trump's return as president, plus two new chapters on impeachment and secession. The impeachment chapter begins with an overview of Andrew Johnson's impeachment and then describes how the framers' fear of tyranny led them to put a process for removing a president in the Constitution. It also addresses the more recent impeachments of Bill Clinton and Donald Trump. Secession, on the other hand, isn't mentioned in the Constitution, but this chapter identifies ways that states, especially in our increasingly fractured country, could secede anyway. The Levinsons prove once again that an examination of the Constitution is always timely and relevant. —*Angela Leeper*

Fight AIDS! How Activism, Art, and Protest Changed the Course of a Deadly Epidemic and Reshaped a Nation.

By Michael G. Long.

June 2025. 288p. illus. Norton/Young Readers, $19.99 (9781324053538). Gr. 9–12. 306.760.

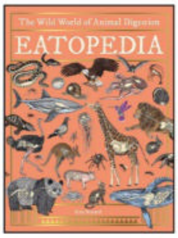
Long presents a detailed, well-researched resource on the history, science, and cultural impact of the AIDS crisis, including context related to the concurrent fight for LGBTQIA+ rights and important events in that mission. Long focuses primarily on the effects AIDS had on the community, including the difficulty of procuring medical treatment and having the disease taken seriously. By connecting these ideas with passages on queer history through the perspectives of those who lived it, Long paints a vivid picture of life during the AIDS crisis. Throughout, Long includes protest art from the period, which helps capture the emotional energy of the time. With clear affection for the LGBTQIA+ community, Long describes the effect of AIDS not only on those who individually suffered from the disease but on the community at large—so many people lost so much, which he doesn't gloss over. Teen readers will come away with an enriched understanding of the context of the AIDS crisis and its effect on individuals and the community, as well as the modern struggles still faced by the queer community today. —*Vi Kwartler*

Middle Readers

★ Eatopedia: The Wild World of Animal Digestion.

By Aina Bestard and Víctor Sabaté. Illus. by Aina Bestard. Tr. by Lisa Agostini.

2025. 172p. Tra, $24.99 (9781962098199). Gr. 3–6. 612.3.



Any collection concerned with poop needs to consider this fact-filled, no-nonsense compendium on animal digestive systems. Almost 20 pages of accessible introductory material familiarizes readers with digestion basics, such as differences between vertebrate and invertebrate systems, monogastic critters versus ruminants, and characteristics of carnivore, herbivore, and omnivore diets. This is followed by 70 graphics-rich, two-page spreads on specific animals (including humans). Each entry covers one creature and includes a full-color illustration of its exterior, a detailed interior diagram of its digestive system, and standardized handy facts, including habitat, diet (both what they eat and what eats them), physical features that help with food ingestion, when they eat, how much, and what they excrete. Subjects range from crab hacker barnacles (favorite food: whatever they're currently eating) to pigeons and doves (the only birds that can drink with their heads down) to Bactrian camels (their upper lips consist of independent halves, so they can—and do—eat just about anything) to wombats and their legendary cubic poo. The pages resemble archival texts; there's not much support material beyond a glossary and table of contents. Still, this is a title to be savored and pored over and is sure to attract enthusiastic audiences. —*Kathleen McBroom*

The Eclipse of 1919: How Einstein's Theory of General Relativity Changed Our World.

By Emily Arnold McCully. Illus. by the author.

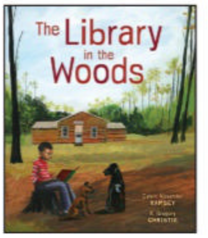
July 2025. 40p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $18.99 (9780316475525). Gr. 1–5. 530.11072.

Growing up in a German household, Albert Einstein loved figuring out how things work. Even as a toddler, he was so often lost in thought that the maid called him "the dopey one." Later, his imagination and "thought experiments" led him to discover new ways of understanding forces such as gravity. Isaac Newton had developed his theories some 200 years earlier, but Einstein enjoyed seeking his own answers. When his theory of relativity was first published during WWI, it was largely ignored. But after he found a way to test the theory using photographs taken during a solar eclipse, the images supported his ideas and led to his reputation as a genius. This picture book's prologue briefly introduces Newtonian physics and how Einstein's "wild ideas" challenged widely accepted views. The appended "Sources" section includes books and other resources that may be helpful to teachers introducing Einstein or eclipses to children. The concise text introduces biographical and scientific information, while McCully's distinctive ink-and-watercolor pictures beautifully illustrate the people, their actions, and the period settings. —*Carolyn Phelan*

★ The Library in the Woods.

By Calvin Alexander Ramsey. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie.

Aug. 2025. 32p. Carolrhoda, $19.99 (9781541599123). Gr. 2–5.

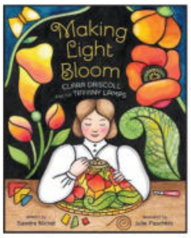


A Black family maintains a farm in North Carolina until, after the crops are destroyed two years running, Junior's father moves his wife and son into town. Although the library there excludes Black residents, Junior discovers a log cabin in a forest clearing where he can borrow three books per visit. This library's collection includes many books by Black writers. Junior chooses three books, one for each of his parents and one for himself. Puzzled when his father sits with his book every evening but doesn't open it, Junior asks his mother, who confides that his father cannot read. In writing the story, Ramsey was inspired by his childhood memories of watching his older brother Junior smiling, grimacing, and laughing while reading books, as well as the author's own experiences with the nearby "library in the woods." In an appended note, Ramsey explains that the story reflects its setting in the Jim Crow South, where literacy was often used to exclude Black residents from voting. The first-person narrative unfolds with simplicity, clarity, and emotional resonance. Christie's illustrations, painted with acrylics, capture the tone of events as well as the look of the mid-twentieth-century setting. The use of juxtaposed colors is particularly effective in expressing the moods of the story. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Making Light Bloom: Clara Driscoll and the Tiffany Lamps.

By Sandra Nickel. Illus. by Julie Paschkis.

June 2025. 32p. Peachtree, $18.99 (9781682636091). Gr. 2–5. 748.2.



Artist Louis Comfort Tiffany gave his name to the intricate stained glass lamps for which he is so celebrated, but they were actually designed and executed between 1888 and 1909 by Clara Driscoll and her all-women team of artisans. This didn't come to light until 2005, when a trove of letters Clara wrote home to her mother and sisters about her work at Tiffany Studios was discovered in an attic. This picture-book biography showcases Driscoll's genius at creating stained glass lamps featuring motifs from nature, like dragonflies, cobwebs, wildflowers, and butterflies, even as her status as a woman prevented her from receiving credit for her work. The text follows Clara from her girlhood in Ohio, surrounded by gardens and fields—with the illustrations cleverly superimposing what became Clara's nature motifs of flowers and dragonflies on trees and bushes—through art school and, finally, to her work as chief lamp designer at Tiffany Studios. The steps involved from design through converting cut glass into art are depicted clearly throughout. The illustrations, drawn with india ink and then painted with gouache, marvelously mimic the motifs, shapes, and heavy black outlines of the stained glass. A terrific blend of art and social history set in an absorbing biography about an unacknowledged genius. Can be paired with Susan Goldman Rubin's 2025 *Dragonflies of Glass*. *—Connie Fletcher*

Malcolm Lives! The Official Biography of Malcolm X for Young Readers.

By Ibram X. Kendi.

2025. 400p. illus. Farrar, $19.99 (9780374311865). Gr. 5–8. 320.54.

This comprehensive biography of Malcolm X, published in honor of the centennial of his birth, comes from award-winning author Kendi, of 2019's *How to Be a (Young) Antiracist* and 2020's *Stamped (for Kids)* renown. The book, intended for a middle-grade audience, is consistently engaging and relatable, despite its daunting length (almost 350 pages of text, plus another 50 for source notes). There's plenty of satisfying backstory that effectively creates historical, social, and racial context, making both Malcolm X's personal story and his public, evolving religious and political convictions understandable and convincing. The story begins with his mother facing down the Klan while pregnant with Malcolm and continues through four-year-old Malcolm watching his house burn down after another Klan raid, his father's tragic death, and his mother's ensuing mental illness. All aspects of Malcolm's life are covered in detail, including his Harlem zoot-suiter and drug-peddling days, draft dodging, criminal career, and prison time, increasing the significance of his later conversion to Islam and civil rights activism. Nonsensational, rational coverage extends through his assassination and continuing legacy. Period photos and primary sources create immediacy; the tone is consistently accessible and appropriate for its intended audience. This impressive offering is sure to become the definitive biography of Malcolm X and belongs in school and public libraries. *—Kathleen McBroom*

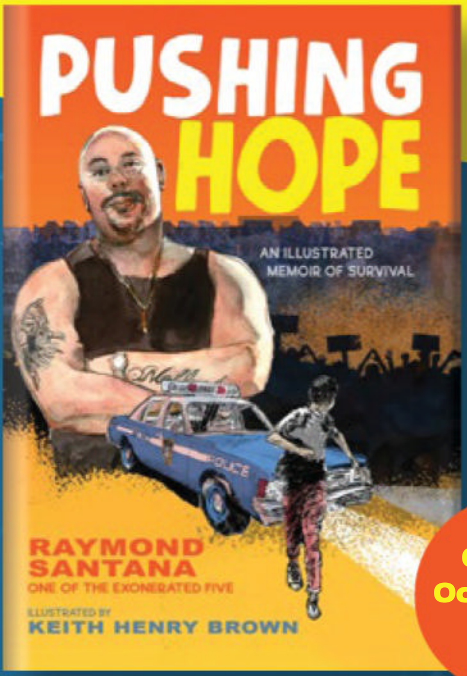
The Science of Sound: Pitch, Volume, Music, and Noise with Hands-On Science Activities for Kids.

By Andi Diehn. Illus. by Micah Rauch.

June 2025. 112p. Nomad, $24.95 (9781619309937); paper, $19.95 (9781619309968). Gr. 3–6. 534.

Surprisingly enough, there are relatively few recent offerings exploring noise that are designed for middle-grade audiences. This thoroughly engaging introduction to the science behind making, transmitting, and receiving sound includes more than 25 kid-friendly experiments that effectively reinforce concepts. Information

Continued on p.72



One of the Central Park Five reflects on his wrongful conviction—and tireless fight for his 2002 exoneration—in this moving young adult illustrated memoir.

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A Tribute to a True Original

By Sarah Hunter

I hope longtime *Booklist* contributor and library luminary Michael Cart, who passed away earlier this year, will forgive us for occupying his regular column, which he wrote for precisely three decades. But I can't think of a better use of this space—in which he engagingly mused about books, libraries, and their importance—than to muse about *his* deep and abiding influence on books and libraries.

I began to work with Michael late enough in his career that I encountered him almost exclusively in his writing about books. For anyone else, that would be a small window, but for Michael, it was an invitingly open door into his life and vocation. His work—thousands of reviews, hundreds of columns, dozens of books both authored and edited—bears the unmistakable imprint of his generosity (a word you will encounter frequently from others here), both in his reviews of books and in his attitudes about readers. Michael believed staunchly in the capacity of teens to appreciate great literature, which was a driving force behind his efforts to establish the Michael L. Printz award.

All of this made him a valued voice for authors, but it also helped shape the mindset of library workers, encouraging them to treat teens as individuals with varied needs and interests. Michael recognized how important it was for young readers especially to see themselves and their concerns reflected in their literature, and this core principle drove his important, vocal, and career-spanning advocacy for LGBTQIA+ teens and the books they saw themselves in.

The tributes that follow, from authors he admired and librarians he inspired, represent just a slim sample of the profound impact he had on the field.

"There are so many names one could associate with Michael Cart: prize winners, authors he championed, his legion of friends throughout the library and publishing worlds. But perhaps the name that everyone associates with Michael is Freddy the Pig. Freddy, for those who don't know (and Michael would frown if you didn't), was a character created by author Walter R. Brooks, who appeared in a series of 26 books that spanned more than 30 years. As someone who knows what it's like to fall in love with a series and champion it through your adult life, I can appreciate Michael's devotion to both Freddy and Brooks, whose biography, *Talking Animals and Others,* he penned in 2009. It must be said that Bill Ott, editor of Michael's long-running column at *Booklist*, did have to be on the lookout for mentions of Freddy in columns that seemingly had nothing to do with talking pigs. Yet Michael was a clever enough writer to usually make it work. Michael Cart was an erudite and sophisticated man, but his love of Freddy allowed his friends to see what a sweet boy he must have been; his sweetness—and kindness—were qualities he carried throughout his life. Miss you, Michael."
—Ilene Cooper, Author and former Booklist *Editor*

"Michael Cart may have branded himself 'Librarian to the Stars' (shoutout to Beverly Hills Public Library!), but in Libraryland where *I* live, *he* was the star. Every year, *he* was the one we looked to for which teen books to read and which to not. And while he may have used overhead transparencies longer than anyone else I know, he was in many, far more important ways on the cutting edge—championing and contributing to a golden era of LGBTQIA+ literature for young adults. Michael's own star is certain to sparkle on in our profession and on the shelves and in the hearts of thousands of readers."
—Andrew Medlar, President & Director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

"My involvement with YALSA started because I heard Michael Cart speak at a conference over 20 years ago. His sessions were always full of excitement for YA books, and he always pushed those in attendance to join YALSA and volunteer for reading committees. So I did; I served on a number of award committees, used his book *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* when I taught a college class, and eventually served as YALSA president in 2011–12. I've always considered Cart to be my motivation for getting involved in YALSA."
—Sarah Hill, Director of Library Services, Lake Land College, Illinois

"A great book critic—and Michael Cart was one of the genuine greats—analyzes not just a work's ambition and success but also the broader literary landscape in which that book lives. And for many decades, no one understood the landscape of YA lit quite like Michael Cart. As an early champion of my work and so many other YA writers, Michael saw the future—not always, and not with perfect clarity, but with a generosity of spirit and openness to reading experiences that marks a great librarian.

"As readers of this magazine will know, a *Booklist* review must be concise while still being expressive, and all in 175 words. The review must introduce you to the work while simultaneously evaluating it. Again and again through the decades, Cart managed this trick brilliantly, never adding a needless word. He continued the work until the very end of his life—just a couple of months ago, he generously and thoughtfully reviewed my most recent book—and truly built a body of work as a critic and a columnist that shaped the landscape of YA fiction. I will miss his vibrant, essential voice."
—John Green, Author

"I was always a little intimidated by Michael because his wide knowledge and expertise about YA books preceded him, but he was very sweet and down to earth, and I loved the fact that he liked some of the same books I did—they weren't the most literary and serious ones! He was generous with his time and advice and will be missed by all of us who had the chance to meet or get to know him."
—Sharon Rawlins, Youth Services Specialist, New Jersey State Library

"Michael Cart was introduced to me when I began attending ALA Conferences in the early 1980s, and I was in awe of him because of his knowledge of YA literature. What a gentleman, and one who was also modest, knowledgeable, and caring—and with a delicious sense of humor. To be around the two "*M*s," Michael Cart and Mike Printz, offered one a cache of library information, both humorous and historical. My library career was enriched thanks to Michael Cart."
—Pam Spencer Holley, Librarian, Former YALSA President (2005–6)

"When Michael Cart approached me about being in an anthology, it was a yes before he even had to ask. After all, his encouragement about my first book had been the most substantial I'd received from someone who wasn't related to me or my publisher. Then he gave me the assignment, confoundingly wide: *Write something gay*. And I found myself writing the short story that would ultimately become my novel *Two Boys Kissing*, which is dedicated to him. It is about the gay generation that came before me watching over the gay generation that came after me—with a care, a curiosity, a passion, and a humor that is 100% Michael Cart. To a person of *my* generation, Michael was the gay uncle of YA: a trailblazer, a guide, a figure of both taste and tact, whose very existence (like that of most gay uncles) showed it was okay to be who you want to be, because he got there first, and he turned out all right. By documenting what we were doing, he made us realize the power and history of what we did. When an author passes, we each leave behind a body of work. Michael leaves behind a body of literature."
—David Levithan, Author and Editor

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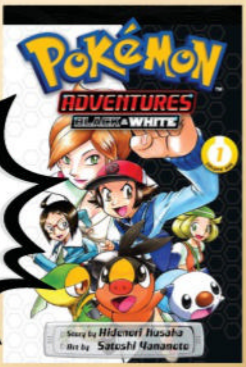
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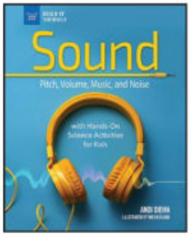
Continued from p.67

is presented in pleasing, graphics-rich layouts that feature photos, drawings, diagrams, lists of vocabulary words, essential questions, and QR Codes for primary sources, videos, and sound samples, plus additional sidebars on all kinds of interesting tidbits. Chapters progress through the importance and makeup of different types of sounds, how they're made and manipulated, how hearing actually works, and technological applications (sonar, ultrasound, immersive audio). Each chapter concludes with four or five step-by-step, easily adaptable, easily expandable activities, ranging from the very simple (notebook collections of favorite noises) to the tried-and-true (string telephones and rubber band guitars) to the fun and experimental (construction paper funnels that mimic animal ears) to working with smartphone speakers, recorders, and amplifiers. Some projects tend toward arts and crafts, others the scientific method, and others hands-on (create your own sound maze). Suitable for both group and individual exploration and containing projects requiring common, easy-to-find everyday materials, this makes a fun and attractive addition for STEAM collections. —*Kathleen McBroom*

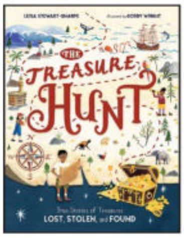


The Treasure Hunt: True Stories of Treasures Lost, Stolen, and Found.

By Leisa Stewart-Sharpe. Illus. by Gordy Wright.

June 2025. 64p. Charlesbridge, $18.99 (9781623546298). Gr. 1–4. 622.1.

This solve-a-mystery-on-the-run treasure hunt takes readers through a dozen of the world's most puzzling and famous disappearances, including stolen art masterpieces, jewels buried with the *Titanic*, and still-missing artifacts, like Viking Lewis chessmen and Russian Fabergé eggs. It also showcases great finds, such as the Terracotta Warriors, 8,000 strong, unearthed by a Chinese farmer in 1974. The story, written in the second person, is extremely involving, starting with the declaration that this is "your" story, beginning with you and your two best friends, Saksham and Zuri, finding a message (signed by Captain Kidd) in a bottle about hidden treasure. The trio of sleuths follows a trail of clues left by a reported ghost captain in real time. Is the captain trying to nab treasures or destroy them? A fun interactive feature here is the opportunity to solve the clues left by the captain, including pigpen ciphers, Morse code, inscriptions, runes, and GPS coordinates, by using a pencil and a separate sheet of paper. The illustrations, hand-painted in gouache, acrylic, and inks, propel readers through the narrative with a mix of representational artwork, informational sidebars, and cartoon panels. Back matter includes a section on how to go on your own treasure hunt, such as orienteering or geocaching. This deft blend of history, mystery, and code-cracking is sure to delight young sleuths. —*Connie Fletcher*



The Unexplained: UFOs.

By Adam Allsuch Boardman. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 96p. Flying Eye, paper, $15.99 (9781838749477). Gr. 5–8. 001.942.

Because children's fascination with aliens never wanes, this heavily illustrated guide to UFO sightings will be an instant hit. Its sleek, digital design channels a retro aesthetic with a limited color palette, geometric forms, and stylized fonts. Beginning with ancient civilizations and the panic of the *War of the Worlds* 1938 radio broadcast, double-page spreads highlight key topics and theories chronologically. Information is presented by decade once the 1940s arrive, as this marks the modern history of UFOs, with such events as the first sighting of a "flying saucer" and the Roswell incident. Within each section, information is further chunked into short, digestible parts with complementary illustrations and infographics. As young readers travel through this time line, they'll encounter men in black, Area 51, crop circles, myriad UFO experiences, organizations that study these phenomena, government responses, and more unusual activities. Throughout the fun, the author also makes it clear that some conspiracy theories, such as ancient aliens, are damaging to historic human cultures. A visually appealing selection for curious minds and budding ufologists. —*Angela Leeper*

Young

Be the Light: How She Became Angela Davis.

By Daria Peoples. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 56p. Greenwillow, $19.99 (9780063206786). K–Gr. 3. 322.4.

Before Angela Davis was the icon that she is today, she was just a little girl who knew she deserved the right to live a life unencumbered by hatred. She knew friendship and community in Birmingham, Alabama, but when her family moved, she learned about racism so virulent that the neighborhood came to be known as Dynamite Hill. Amid the injustice, young Davis' spirit grew strong while she played in the countryside and found respite with her people. This foundation, *Be the Light* establishes, is what gave Davis the power to teach, protest, survive imprisonment, and thrive as a representation of American resistance. Readers will come to know Davis as an ordinary girl who grew up to be an extraordinary woman. Vibrant watercolor illustrations highlight the role of community, ancestors, persistence, and hope in Davis' journey. This biography demonstrates how identity is shaped by environment and should be part of all social studies curricula. Back matter provides additional material for readers to incorporate into their own lives. —*Amina Chaudhri*

The Cities of the Future.

By Didier Cornille. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Charis Ainslie.

June 2025. 56p. Post Wave, $19.99 (9798895090145). K–Gr. 3. 720.

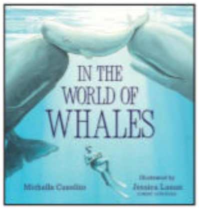
This thoroughly engaging, graphics-rich offering profiles eco-friendly developments in over 20 international urban settings. Background information explains how cities developed, resulting in problems like overcrowding and pollution, and poses questions (Could our cities be greener? Can we grow food in cities?) that introduce examples where architects and landscapers developed unique solutions. Some of these innovations date back a bit (nineteenth-century cable cars that facilitate transportation), some cite repurposed resources (the Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris, a former train station turned start-up workspace), and others feature cutting edge advancements (Singapore's smart-city technology that monitors infrastructure systems). All examples are explained in accessible, interesting excerpts, but the illustrations steal the show. Minutely detailed, full-color drawings, including cutaways and bird's-eye views, show skyscrapers, parks, workplaces, and whole neighborhoods teeming with people as they go about their daily lives, happily engaged in various activities. There aren't any notes or references, but this fun adventure from France (a handful of American city features are represented, including Manhattan's High Line and Detroit's urban gardens) is sure to attract detail-oriented browsers. —*Kathleen McBroom*

In the World of Whales.

By Michelle Cusolito. Illus. by Jessica Lanan.

June 2025. 52p. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823453429). K–Gr. 3. 599.52.

If ever the description of a rare natural encounter will leave readers filled with wonder, look to these spare, luminous observations of a sperm-whale pod clustering about a just-born calf. Basing her work on a free diver's actual experiences, Cusolito describes how a mother whale presents her newborn to each whale in attendance—as well as to the awed diver suspended nearby—while carefully hovering in attendance as the newborn's crumpled flukes slowly unfurl, nudging it toward the surface periodically to take a breath, and at last leading it down into deeper waters. Becoming "one with the whales," the diver likewise must return at intervals to the surface to exhale ("hwaaahh!") and refill his lungs ("whooooh!") in a stately rhythm that finds visual echoes in Lanan's images of massive whales and their watcher curving around and about one another through deep fields of blue in a graceful



"underwater ballet": "Who's studying whom?" The dance culminates in an eye-filling fold-out whirl, with an equally enthralling glimpse in the back matter of a female sperm whale's anatomy, accompanied by further facts about whales and about free diving. *—John Peters*

Mystery Driver: The Story of Alice Johnson and the First Soap Box Derby.

By Elizabeth Tracy. Illus. by Anna Aronson.

June 2025. 48p. Candlewick/MIT Kids, $18.99 (9781536231571). K–Gr. 3. 927.9.

Shining a spotlight on another "hidden hero," this profile celebrates Alice Johnson, a Dayton, Ohio, child who ignored announcements that the 1933 derby was "a race for . . . boys," constructed a vehicle in her father's machine shop, and on the day placed third in her class. Basing the book on archival documents and interviews with Johnson's family, debut author Tracy offers a dramatic account of the race itself and in the author's note states that Johnson—her direct, blue-eyed gaze conveying properly inspiring levels of courage and self-confidence—won third place the next year as well, but also that girls were formally banned from 1935 until 1971. Along with stressing the crucial importance of sturdy design and of taking repeated practice runs to sharpen driving skills, the author expands on historical events with rich back matter, discussing relevant physics principles such as gravity, friction, and aerodynamics, plus a bibliography and further reading resources. *—John Peters*

Poops and Farts: The Bottom Line.

By Štěpánka Sekaninová. Illus. by Miroslava Gomolčáková and Daniel Handák. Tr. by Graeme Dibble and Suzanne Dibble.

June 2025. 48p. Albatros, $17.95 (9788000074405). Gr. 1–3. 612.36.

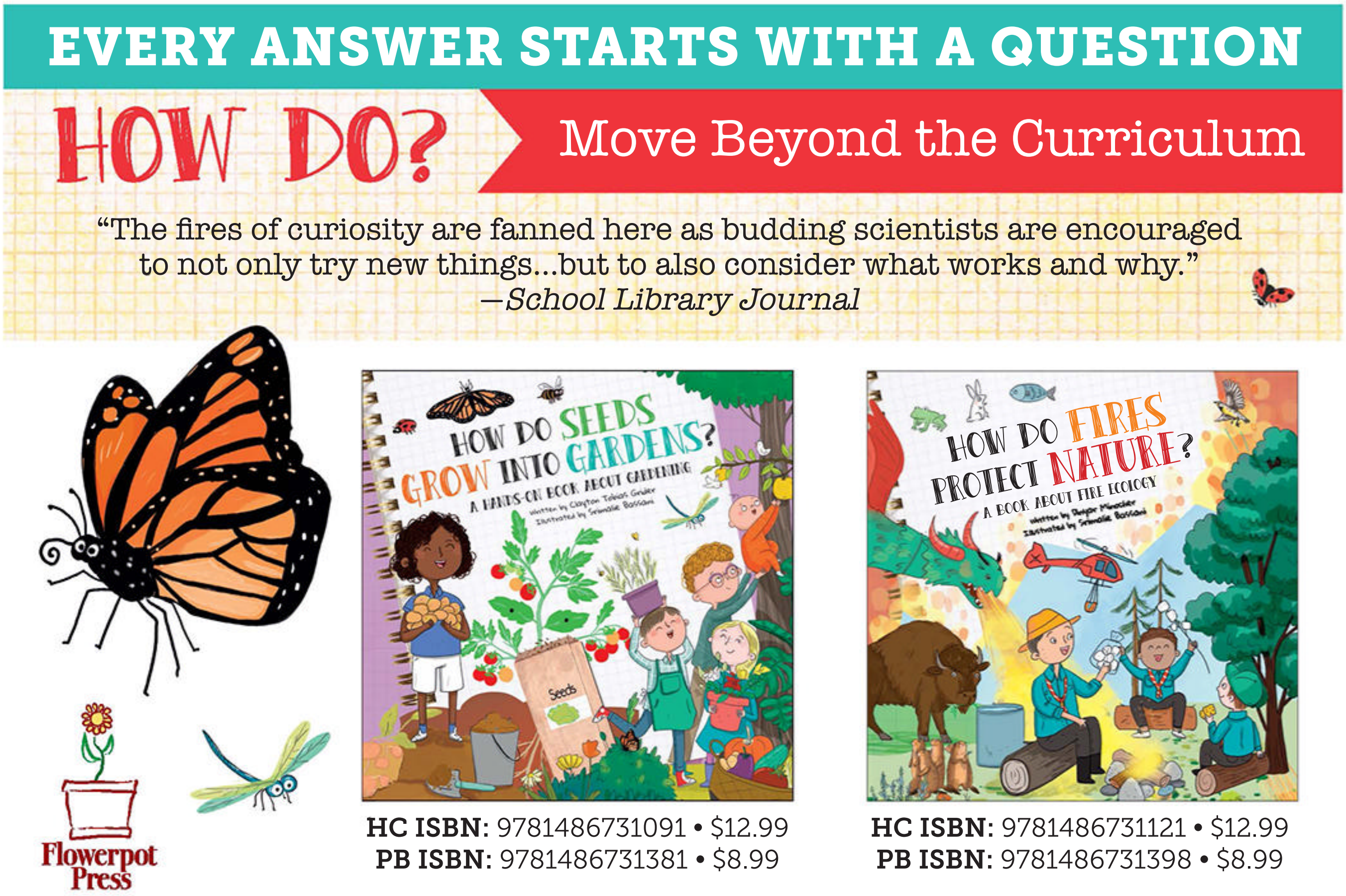
In a swirling bowl full of snicker-worthy tidbits ripe for casual browsers to fish out, this import from the Czech Republic scours unspecified scientific and historical sources for the dirt on a broad array of juicy topics, from the invention of toilets and toilet paper to what poop's color and consistency can signal diet- and health-wise. "And to think," Sekaninová writes, "we turn up our noses at poo!" The illustrators deposit hilarious cartoon galleries of privies and of items used for butt wipes through the ages, along with lively assemblages of racially diverse human figures and small brown blobs with big eyes and stubby limbs to present, for example, animals capable of shooting their poop, best practices for pooping outdoors or in space, and (perhaps) more usefully, foods and activities that may ease trapped gas, diarrhea, and constipation. There may be little here that's new to dedicated scatologists, but this does offer fresh whiffs of fact and factoid on an ever-popular topic. *—John Peters*

This Is How a Ball Rolls: The Science of Wobbling, Bouncing, Spinning Balls.

By Heather Tekavec. Illus. by Suharu Ogawa.

June 2025. 32p. Kids Can, $19.99 (9781525309687). K–Gr. 3. 531.6.

This is a fun and inviting look at the science behind bouncing balls, ranging from marbles and beach balls to specialized sports balls (basketball, soccer, yoga, bowling) to giant human hamster balls, aka Zorbs. Bubbly rhyming stanzas (that can stand alone as an abbreviated narrative for younger audiences) aptly describe characteristics (for rubber bouncy balls: "Zigging, zagging, zippy ball, / Off-the-walls-and-ceiling ball"); slightly more sophisticated but still accessible text explains special features (the fuzz on tennis balls creates wind resistance) and basic science principles (elasticity, aerodynamics, trajectory), further defined in a glossary. The brief, engaging commentary is aptly supported by cheerful, colorful illustrations featuring a cast of kids of various abilities enjoying games and activities. Whether explaining why every baseball has exactly 108 stitches (it helps pitchers grip the ball and facilitates spin) or talking about giant Kin-balls often found in elementary school gyms (four feet tall, weigh about as much as a pineapple), interesting tidbits fill every page. This buoyant introduction to basic kinetics will energize school and public library STEM collections. *—Kathleen McBroom*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SERIES NONFICTION
SHOWCASE

Ancient Mythologies Series. ABDO/DiscoveRoo. Gr. 2–5. (6 titles)

Chinese Mythology. By Elizabeth Andrews. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.95 (9781098247027). 299.511.
Hindu Mythology. By Elizabeth Andrews. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.95 (9781098247041). 294.51.
Slavic Mythology. By Elizabeth Andrews. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.95 (9781098247065). 299.18.
West African Mythology. By Elizabeth Andrews. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.95 (9781098247072). 299.62.

Early cultures from every part of the world formed their own spiritual beliefs, and the volumes in the Ancient Mythologies series summarize some of these distinct beliefs. Scaffolded chapters with straightforward text introduce each culture's creation story, prominent gods or deities, other supernatural beings and events, and a few legendary and mythological stories. *Chinese Mythology* focuses on the five divine emperors who ruled China and became gods when they died, as well as the animals (with an emphasis on the dragon) that make up the zodiac signs. *Hindu Mythology* centers on the gods Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu and their roles in the cycle of existence and the formation of the universe. *Slavic Mythology* relates the importance of trees, particularly the World Tree and its branches, trunk, and roots that contain the three realms of the gods, humans, and the underworld. In addition to explaining the Yoruba peoples' deities, known as orisha, *West African Mythology* spotlights the significance of water stories and trickster tales to many West African cultures. Each book ends with a look at how these beliefs and related rituals may still be practiced today. A mix of colorful visuals, including photographs, reproductions of artworks, illustrations, maps, and charts, adds context to the detailed descriptions, while intermittent QR codes link to even more information, videos, and activities in this solid series. —*Angela Leeper*

A Day in the Life Of . . . Series. Enslow. K–Gr. 2. (4 titles)

A Bus Driver. By Alex Hall. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $18.20 (9781978541818). 388.3.
A Firefighter. By Noah Leatherland. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $18.20 (9781978541849). 628.9.
A Nurse. By Alex Hall. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $18.20 (9781978541870). 610.73.
A Police Officer. By Noah Leatherland. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $18.20 (9781978541900). 363.2.

The books in the Day in the Life series follow well-known types of community workers as they go about their workday, in the context of jobs young readers might want to pursue someday. Besides typical tasks, the books also focus on skills and practices that are relevant to young readers, with particular emphasis on literacy skills and physical fitness. For example, bus drivers must drive carefully, greet passengers, take responsibility, and use literacy skills to complete paperwork. Firefighters check their equipment, exercise, respond to emergencies, investigate fires, and interact with the community. Nurses check patients, provide medication, educate patients, deal with emergencies, and use literacy skills to write reports. Police officers conduct patrols, deal with emergencies, investigate crimes, collect evidence, and complete paperwork using their literacy skills. Appropriate stock images of workers feature both gender and racial diversity. Unlike many similar books that bring together unconnected stock images, each Day in the Life book uses a series of stock images featuring the same worker (plus a few supplementary images as needed), creating a visual throughline. The books also include standard nonfiction features such as a table of contents, a glossary, and a brief index. —*Miriam Aronin*

Dealing with Disorders and Disease Series. Cheriton. Gr. 6–9. (6 titles)

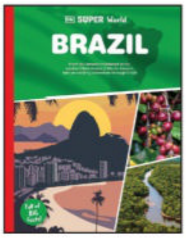
Autism. By Sarah Eason. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $25.99 (9781917187060). 616.85882.
Cystic Fibrosis. By Sarah Eason. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $25.99 (9781917187183). 616.3.
Down Syndrome. By Sarah Eason. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $25.99 (9781917187220). 616.85.
Multiple Sclerosis. By Sarah Eason. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $25.99 (9781917187145). 616.83.

This intelligent new series offers readers a deep exploration of various diseases and disorders. Each title provides detailed scientific explanations about the causes, symptoms, variations, treatments, successes, and current research surrounding these conditions, making it an invaluable resource for both learning and gaining empathy. In *Autism*, the book highlights various ways that autistic people experience and interact with the world, including managing social situations and common styles of communication, learning, and working. It also emphasizes the importance of support, coping strategies, and understanding in creating a more inclusive world. *Cystic Fibrosis* discusses how this disease inhibits cell movement and causes the lungs and digestive system to become "clogged up" and unable to function in a normal manner. *Down Syndrome* details treatment options, educational programs, and how people with this genetic condition can lead independent, fulfilling lives. *Multiple Sclerosis* explains how this progressive disease affects the nervous system, causing mobility problems and issues such as depression. It also provides a clear picture of the different challenges that people with MS face, such as social interactions and fatigue, as well as how treatments can help manage the disease. These titles in the Dealing with Disorders and Disease series include many important details about medical advances and treatments, while encouraging compassion, understanding, and support for those with these conditions. —*Alana Jara*

DK Super World Series. DK. Gr. 3–6. (2 titles)

★ **DK Super World: Brazil.** By DK. June 2025. 48p. illus. $12.99 (9780593966419). 918.1.
★ **DK Super World: Norway.** By DK. June 2025. 48p. illus. $12.99 (9780593966396). 914.81.

The DK Super World series offers a refreshing take on country profiles. As expected from typical youth-oriented geography titles, the books feature landmarks, unique wildlife, and major cities. The freshness derives from bright and readable maps, bite-sized information on daily life and culture, and features like a comparison chart with human outlines juxtaposed with those of native animals, such as the capybara and anaconda in *Brazil.* Flora-and-fauna facts reside alongside revelations about cultural practices, such as the African origins of Brazilian samba and capoeira. Folklore features prominently in *Norway*, which includes a multipage comics story about a troll and a page describing Norse gods, with suggestions for creating one's own imaginary hero. Readers



are also treated to a day in the life of an 11-year-old Norwegian girl and a recipe for a traditional dish. Both titles feature information on Native peoples and religions of the nations, along with brief histories of willing and forced immigration. One emphasis, from a distinctly contemporary perspective, is that dominant cultures are not the only ones worth studying. A hefty glossary and index reflect the breadth of information covered. An outstanding pick for intermediate elementary and middle-school students, both for assignments and general interest. *—Deidre Winterhalter*

Exploring Invertebrates Series. The Child's World/Wonder. K–Gr. 3. (8 titles)

Amazing Arachnids: Spiders and Their Relatives. By Catherine Ipcizade. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $22.95 (9781503894488). 595.
Investigating Insects: All the Buggy Facts. By Catherine Ipcizade. 2025. 24p. illus. $22.95 (9781503894471). 595.
Mysterious Mollusks: Shells, Slime, and Suction. By Kelley Barth. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $22.95 (9781503894501). 594.
Nematodes and Tardigrades: Small but Mighty. By Kelley Barth. 2025. 24p. illus. lib. ed., $22.95 (9781503894549). 595.

Readers will love getting to learn more about the largest animal group with the Exploring Invertebrates series. With the spineless creatures scaling from microscopic to seemingly larger-than-life, there are plenty of species to discover. Each title has five short chapters with a balance of text, infographics, and fun facts, and a "Wonder More" section prompts readers to consider deeper questions about what they learned. Throughout the books, new vocabulary words are in bold orange letters with phonetic spelling to encourage sounding out. With over 100,000 known species of arachnids in the world, *Amazing Arachnids* teaches readers about the important roles of scorpions, spiders, and ticks in larger ecosystems. Explore the complex life of bugs in *Investigating Insects*, which allows readers to discover the buzzing world of crickets, moths, houseflies, wasps, and beetles and their life cycles. Dive deep with *Mysterious Mollusks* to learn about slimy snails, clams, squids, and octopuses. In *Nematodes and Tardigrades*, readers will discover prehistoric parasitic creatures that can't be seen with the human eye. For further learning, readers can utilize the "Find Out More" section in each book to find physical and digital resources. Each title provides instructions for a hands-on activity or craft to further cement new concepts. *—Reilly Grant*

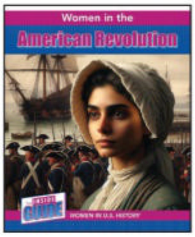
In the News: Need to Know Series. Bearport/SilverTip. Gr. 3–7. (6 new titles)

Artificial Intelligence. By Ashley Kuehl. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.07 (9798892327602). 006.30.
Censorship. By Ashley Kuehl. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.07 (9798892327619). 303.3.
Climate Migrants. By Ashley Kuehl. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.07 (9798892327626). 304.8.
Deepfakes. By Ashley Kuehl. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.07 (9798892327657). 001.9.

In the News: Need to Know is a powerful, well-researched series that introduces young readers to some of today's most pressing and complex issues. Each book takes a real-world subject and breaks it down using clear, engaging language while encouraging curiosity and critical thinking. *Artificial Intelligence* explores the pros and cons of AI, showing readers how AI systems become "smart" by using data provided by people, thereby being susceptible to bias, errors, and copyright infringement. *Censorship* tackles the control of ideas, showing how books, songs, and even paintings can be restricted or removed from institutions, thus opening important conversations about freedom of information. *Climate Migrants* sheds light on those forced to flee their homes due to climate disasters, food scarcity, or environmental changes, making this global issue feel personal as readers witness how it currently affects different communities. *Deepfakes* explains how videos that look and sound real, such as a clip of celebrities saying cruel things, can be completely fabricated, teaching students to question what they see and how they consume information online. With real news examples, dyslexia-friendly font, and relevant factual asides, this high/low series is successfully crafted for a broad range of ages, making it a solid resource for classrooms teaching research, media literacy, reading, and journalistic writing. *—Aurora Dominguez*

Inside Guide: Women in U.S. History Series. Cavendish Square. Gr. 4–7. (6 titles)

★ **Women in the American Revolution.** By Therese M. Shea. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $21.15 (9781502673060). 973.3.
★ **Women in the Fight against Slavery.** By Therese M. Shea. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $21.15 (9781502673091). 326.8.
★ **Women of the Suffrage Movement.** By Therese M. Shea. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $21.15 (9781502673152). 324.6.
★ **Women in the Wild West.** By Therese M. Shea. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $21.15 (9781502673121). 978.

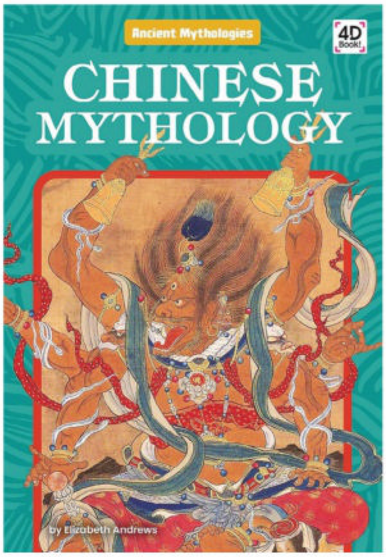


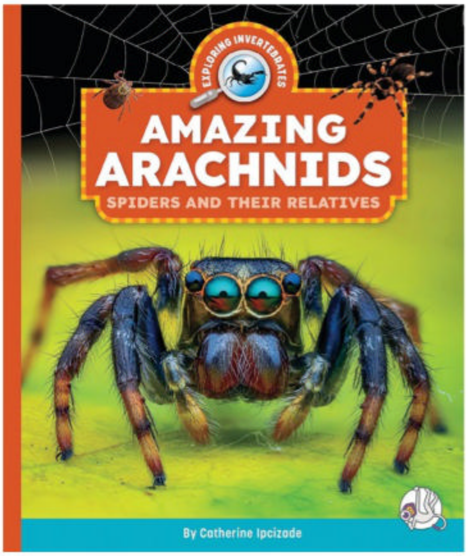
Readers familiar with American history will discover surprising facts and meet trailblazing women in the four books that comprise the Inside Guide: Women in U.S. History series. Each volume challenges readers to reconsider their preconceived notions of the past. *The American Revolution* points out that women whose husbands served in the Continental Army sometimes followed their husbands' regiments, serving as nurses or disguising themselves as men and fighting against the British troops. *The Fight against Slavery* looks at slavery in America from the early 1600s until 1865, when Congress abolished it. From Sojourner Truth to Harriet Tubman and Harriet Beecher Stowe, women actively worked to ban slavery and help enslaved people. *The Suffrage Movement* details American women's struggle to gain the right to vote, from the early years of the U.S. until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. *The Wild West* offers a lively introduction to the American West during the 1800s, challenging the stereotypical view created by TV shows and movies and suggesting that women who moved westward during the period often found freedom and economic opportunities there. Each book in this well-designed series features many colorful illustrations throughout, including reproductions of vintage portrait paintings and prints, as well as period photos of people and places mentioned in the text. An invigorating, informative look at American history. *—Carolyn Phelan*

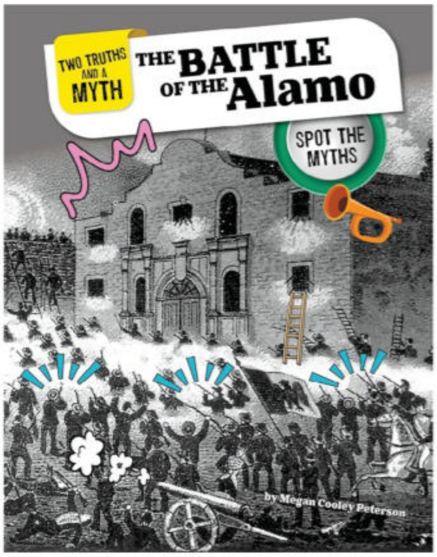
Little Myths Series. Running Press Kids. Gr. 1–3. (2 titles)

Medusa: The Making of a Monster. By Emma Adams. Illus. by Erica Salcedo. 2025. 32p. lib. ed., $15.99 (9798894140964). 292.13.
Thor: The Making of a God. By Emma Adams. Illus. by Sam Caldwell. 2025. 32p. lib. ed., $15.99 (9798894140957). 293.13.

Young fans of the Percy Jackson TV series and Marvel movies will enjoy the Little Myths series, which recounts the origins of famous mythical monsters and gods, but readers without any prior knowledge of Greek and Norse mythology might struggle. Funny and conversational, with crisp, comics-influenced illustrations, these retellings of ancient myths unfortunately miss the mark by not including a pronunciation guide or glossary. Filled with names even an experienced reader might stumble over, like Jörmungandr and Tanngrisnir, *Thor: The Making of a God* could frustrate beginning readers who are unfamiliar with Thor's origins. It's a shame, because the narration is humorous and informative, retelling important moments from Thor's mythos, including Loki's involvement in the creation of Thor's hammer, Mjollnir. *Medusa: The Making of a Monster*, a sympathetic retelling of Medusa's tragic and villainous origin story, faces a similar issue. The text itself suggests the reader is already aware of Medusa's story and introduces an entire pantheon of Greek gods without including any pronunciation help. The story contains rich vocabulary but only a single in-text definition. This series is entertaining and educational but difficult for beginning readers and mythology neophytes. Recommended as supplementals for libraries with well-stocked mythology sections. *—Julie Goldschmied*







Today's Headlines Series. Black Rabbit. Gr. 4–6. (8 titles)

12 Things to Know about Climate Change. By Vicki Hayes. 2025. 48p. illus. lib. ed., $30.95 (9781645823841). 363.763.
12 Things to Know about Global Immigration. By Precious McKenzie. 2025. 48p. illus. lib. ed., $30.95 (9781645823858). 325.0.
12 Things to Know about Political Parties. By Vicki Hayes. 2025. 48p. illus. lib. ed., $30.95 (9781645823872). 324.2.
12 Things to Know about Water Access. By Kristin Eberth. 2025. 48p. illus. lib. ed., $30.95 (9781645823902). 363.

If the Today's Headlines series feels familiar, that's because it's a refreshed and updated version of 12-Story Library's 2016 series, Turning Points in US History. Though it follows the same general structure of highlighting 12 main points about a given topic, the text has been edited to a lower reading level (fourth grade) and updated with new stats and facts. The crisp design features large, eye-catching photos and diagrams, sidebars, and critical-thinking prompts. The topics are timely, and readers will get a good sense of the subjects' breadth if not their depth, making them good first stops on a student's learning or research journey. *Climate Change* presents many facets of this phenomenon, from contributing factors (deforestation, increases in greenhouse gases) to scientific evidence (rising temperatures and sea levels, more extreme weather) to steps people can take to slow its progression. *Global Immigration* considers push (war, natural disasters) and pull (job opportunities, better education) factors that lead to human migration, as well as challenges migrants face. *Political Parties* leads with history, filling in readers on the origins of political parties in the U.S., the general ideals major (and some third) parties encompass today, and the roles they play in elections. *Water Access* dives into difficulties people face in procuring clean, safe water, highlighting such causes as population increase and climate change. —*Julia Smith*

Turning Points in History Series. Apex/Honors. Gr. 3–7. (8 titles)

The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks. By Nick Rebman. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $24.95 (9798892504607). 973.
The Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By Nick Rebman. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $24.95 (9798892504614). 952.
Brown v. Board of Education. By Brienna Rossiter. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $24.95 (9798892504621). 973.
The Cuban Missile Crisis. By Nick Rebman. 2025. 64p. illus. lib. ed., $24.95 (9798892504638). 909.

These titles from the Turning Points in History series present pivotal events in American history, providing ample context. Written at a fourth-grade level, the books align with curriculum spanning grades three through nine. High/low user-friendly features include enlarged text, short sentences, and brief paragraphs surrounded by ample white space. Unique archival photographs and sidebars address details not always included in standard narratives. *The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks* includes especially compelling images while offering considerable background on the beginnings of al-Qaeda in USSR-era Afghanistan; ample attention is given to all four attack sites. In *The Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, period photos capture scenes of devastation resulting from initial experiments and bombing raids, and the text acknowledges that the atomic tests in New Mexico harmed Indigenous populations. *Brown v. Board of Education* includes photos of formerly enslaved people and touches on the baby-doll studies regarding Black children and self-image. This title also mentions the underreported anti-segregation suits brought by parents of Asian children. *The Cuban Missile Crisis* shows the military reconnaissance images of Russian-supplied nuclear weapon launch pads that instigated the crisis, and the narrative effectively builds the heightening tension between Presidents Khrushchev and Kennedy. Additional support includes time lines, glossaries, comprehension questions, and references. These accessible volumes offer unique perspectives into standard curriculum-related research units. —*Kathleen McBroom*

Two Truths and a Myth Series. Capstone. Gr. 4–6. (2 new titles)

The Battle of the Alamo: Spot the Myths. By Megan Cooley Peterson. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.49 (9781669087014). 976.4.
The Boston Tea Party: Spot the Myths. By Megan Cooley Peterson. 2025. 32p. illus. lib. ed., $23.49 (9781669087090). 973.3.

This engaging series for middle-grade readers provides a fresh approach to historical events by challenging readers to distinguish between fact and fiction. In *The Battle of the Alamo*, the book discusses a key moment during the Texas Revolution, in March 1836, when rebels from Texas were inside the Alamo and Mexican soldiers attacked, leading to this historic battle. Readers explore myths, such as whether the Mexican soldiers left any survivors and if Jim Bowie was stuck on his sickbed during the battle. On December 6, 1773, American colonists dumped tea into Griffin's Wharf in the Massachusetts Bay Colony to protest colonists' treatment by the British government. *The Boston Tea Party* invites readers to question widely held beliefs about this event, such as whether Samuel Adams gave the signal to toss the tea or actually wanted it sent back to Britain. Each title includes a glossary of key terms and suggestions for more reading, and vivid photos and illustrations nicely enhance the historical events, figures, and locations featured. The series' interactive approach to history makes it both educational and fun. Two Truths and a Myth is a perfect series for young readers eager to explore history and think critically about the past. —*Alana Jara*

Youth Fiction

Older Readers

13 Days of Summer.

By Stephanie Kate Strohm.

June 2025. 336p. Running Press Kids, paper, $12.99 (9798894141206). Gr. 8–12.

When Carson, Noemi, and Eleanor convince their parents that they're responsible enough to travel to Los Angeles alone to see Taylor Swift in concert, they embark on their first real adventure and in the process allow stranded (and handsome) photographer Dean, who's definitely *not* a serial killer, because he's their math teacher's nephew, to tag along. This breezy outing has everything a summer read needs: three best friends, a road trip from Maine to L.A., a boy with hella good hair, and enough Taylor Swift references to fulfill your wildest dreams. Carson's inner thoughts embody being "happy free confused and lonely at the same time." The familiar emotions in a road-trip saga all play out; they have fun in unfamiliar locales, but the friends push one another's buttons when stressed. While the dialogue among the girls is very enjoyable, the monologues after fights can get repetitive. A best-friends-forever fantasy with a far-fetched but "aw-inspiring" happy ending, this book is a love song to both best friends and to the pop star who gave them their personal soundtrack. —*Jessica Durham*

Amelia, If Only.

By Becky Albertalli.

June 2025. 304p. Harper, $19.99 (9780063045927). Gr. 9–12.

Amelia Applebaum is a truly chaotic bisexual teenage girl. After posting—and then deleting—a promposal video directed at her favorite YouTuber, Walter Holland, Amelia gathers her three best friends and embarks on a road trip across New York state to attend a meet-and-greet Walter is doing at Blackwell College. Along the way, she examines whether what she feels toward Walter is a crush or just your garden-variety parasocial friendship, especially because it's possible she already has a crush—and that Amelia stares at her every day. The novel is written in first-person narration that brilliantly portrays how Amelia's delightful brain works. Between chapters are ephemera of Reddit threads, video transcripts, and news articles showcasing how the world treats those it is parasocially invested in. Albertalli masterfully weaves together characters from Amelia's life with fan favorites from her previous work *Imogen, Obviously* (2023), but the focus is wholly on Amelia and her journey. Amelia is vibrant and easy to root for, and what she learns about parasocial relationships is impactful for all. —*Karis Rogerson*

HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Guess who's back? Albertalli's back, venturing into one of her previous worlds with more fun, chaotic queer romance and a relevant message for the social media age.

Call Your Boyfriend.

By Olivia A. Cole and Ashley Woodfolk.

July 2025. 336p. Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (9781665967143). Gr. 9–12.

Nobody is more likely to fall in love than two sapphics working together to get revenge on the girl who snubbed them. Charm and Beau know this, which is why when Beau agreed to teach Charm how to flirt in order to teach their mutual crush, Maia, a lesson, the two put together a written constitution in which they pledged not to fall for each other. Unsurprisingly, as Charm and Beau progress through their multipart plan to get Maia to go to prom with Charm, they start to fall for each other, checking all the boxes for a mid-2000s rom-com film along the way. While the plot is delightfully trope-y, the characters themselves are unique. Beau is functionally being raised by her older sister and wants to eschew college to get serious with their band; Charm has been raised by her aunt and wants to turn her passion for working with natural hair into a career. With these realistic tidbits tucked in, Charm and Beau's questionably conceived revenge plot provides vital representation and a fun ride. —*Austin Ferraro*

Codebreaker.

By Jay Martel.

July 2025. 384p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, paper, $13 (9781250355546). Gr. 8–12.

If *The Da Vinci Code* had a YA cousin, it would be *Codebreaker*. This debut novel explodes from the beginning, and a twisting plot leads readers through Washington, DC, at breakneck speed while solving codes themselves along the way. Mia's seventeenth birthday is one for the history books, literally; if she can't solve her father's annual birthday scavenger hunt, the country may dissolve into revolution. Unlike on her other birthdays, her father is on the run from the government agents who killed her mother. While a certain suspension of disbelief is required, the story progresses quickly, occasionally flashing back to explain how Mia's father taught her about codes. Mia's love interest, Logan, shows up out of nowhere and gives a few too many white-knight vibes for such a strong protagonist. That being said, their banter is fun and develops their characters nicely, and as Mia finds out her parents' secrets, she learns to trust herself along the way. With a lot of heart, especially regarding how Mia's grief manifests itself, this propulsive novel will appeal to fans of puzzles and spy stories. —*Jessica Durham*

Finding Prince Charming.

By Jamar J. Perry.

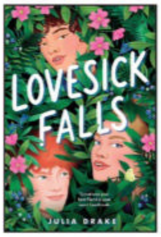
June 2025. 272p. Bloomsbury, $19.99 (9781547612819). Gr. 9–12.

Readers looking for a cute romance with emotional depth will find just what they're searching for in Perry's sweet, satisfying YA debut. Tyriq Howell is simply done with love, especially when a fight with his cheating ex makes him miss an interview for a college scholarship. That is, until he meets the adorable Desmond, a scholarship-office worker who offers Tyriq another chance at an interview if he agrees to pretend to be Desmond's date at a fancy gala. But Desmond has a big secret: not only is he still largely closeted, but he's *Prince* Desmond of Catalina. When Desmond and Tyriq make front-page news, the stakes get much higher. The spark of chemistry as they try to keep up the facade is inevitable, but Perry explores more serious themes as well, such as the struggle and stigma of coming out and finding the strength to seek true happiness, even if that defies parental expectations. Well-rounded characters, sparkling romance, and grounded emotional tension make this a particularly good choice for fans of fake-dating and secret-royals tropes. —*Aurora Dominguez*

★ Lovesick Falls.

By Julia Drake.

June 2025. 336p. Little, Brown, $19.99 (9780759557826). Gr. 7–12.



What happens when you take a gal with a penchant for planning who can fix any sticky situation, a dude with a passion for clowning and falling in love, and a nonbinary cutie who enchants everyone they meet? Why, you get an exceptionally entertaining adaptation of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Best-friend crew Celia, Touchstone, and Ros (as described above, respectively) have convinced their parents that a summer in the redwoods-laden Lovesick Falls is what they need to prepare for senior year and impending adulthood. Celia and Touchstone gain employment with the local theater festival, and the plan was for Ros to play Hestia at home until they happen upon work—until Jess Orlando comes swinging into the picture. Ros is smitten (the feeling is mutual) and earns a job at the same plant nursery. The only problem is, this was going to be the summer Celia professed her love for Ros. Oh, and Touchstone is in love with Celia. What could go wrong? Drake captures the quintessential queer energy of the original Shakespeare, incorporating plenty of quippy back-and-forth dialogue that will please bardolaters and rom-com fans alike. This piece works as an excellent supplement to a Shakespeare study unit or alone as an entertaining, entertainingly cast rom-com focused on the power of friendships new and old. Readers can trust that this one will end in true delight. —*Kelly Ferreira*

★ Never Thought I'd End Up Here.

By Ann Liang.

June 2025. 320p. Scholastic, $19.99 (9781546110675). Gr. 8–12.

Leah Zhang doesn't have much going for her. She quit modeling, fumbled a traditional Chi-

High-Demand Hot List for Youth

Look for reviews of these high-demand titles in forthcoming issues of *Booklist*.

The 13th Day of Christmas. By Adam Rex. Illus. by the author. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823456536). PreS–Gr. 3. Sept.

In classic Rex fashion, the recipient of the gifts from the 12 Days of Christmas carol is overwhelmed by the sheer number of gifts he's gotten before finding a way to spread some Christmas joy.

The Experiment. By Rebecca Stead. Feiwel and Friends, $17.99 (9781250374769). Gr. 3–6. Sept.

Newbery Medalist Stead's latest follows a seemingly normal human boy who's actually an alien, part of an interplanetary experiment to study Earth. But when the experiment starts to go wrong, his Earth days are numbered.

Hansel and Gretel. By Stephen King. Illus. by Maurice Sendak. Harper, $26.99 (9780062644695). Gr. 1–5. Sept.

This is a big one: iconic horror author King turns to picture books in this sure-to-be-haunting rendition of the classic fairy tale, with illustrations drawn from Sendak's set and costume designs for Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* opera.

If Looks Could Kill. By Julie Berry. Simon & Schuster, $21.99 (9781534470811). Gr. 9–12.

Protean Printz Honor winner Berry's latest is a hypnotizing historical fiction blending true crime, revenge, girl reporters, Jack the Ripper, and Medusa.

Jax Freeman and the Tournament of Spirits. By Kwama Mbalia. Disney/Freedom Fire, $17.99 (9781368065108). Gr. 3–6. Oct.

Mbalia follows up his popular magic-school-series opener with this sequel, which finds Jax in a competition with his summoning-school classmates while investigating the origin of some dangerous mythical creatures.

Little Rebels. By Yuyi Morales. Illus. by the author. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823447541). PreS–Gr. 2. Sept.

Award-winning Morales brings her signature art style to this playful story about a trio of kids eager to make change in their community by calling on their ancestors and encouraging readers to join in, too. Simultaneously released in Spanish.

Lost Evangeline. By Kate DiCamillo. Illus. by Sophie Blackall. Candlewick, $17.99 (9781536225525). Gr. 2–5. Sept.

The third book in DiCamillo and Blackall's Norendy Tales series follows the titular girl, who's no bigger than a mouse, as she's cast out of her home and sent on an adventure on her own.

Outside. By Jennifer L. Holm. Scholastic, $17.99 (9781546138143). Gr. 4–7. Oct.

A girl living under strict rules—and harsh consequences—in an isolated compound dreams of leaving to explore Outside in the latest from acclaimed, popular Holm.

Sisters in the Wind. By Angeline Boulley. Holt, $19.99 (9781250328533). Gr. 9–12. Sept.

Best-selling Boulley offers another propulsive mystery, this time centered on a teen fleeing both her past and the foster care system when she learns that she's been kept away from relatives in violation of federal law.

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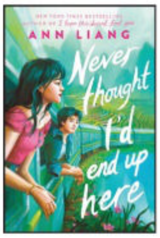
nese blessing and ruined her cousin's wedding, and is now on a two-week trip across China with none other than her irritating childhood nemesis. Leah doesn't know who she is or what the future holds, but she knows this much: she's going to get revenge on Cyrus Sui, even if it means making him fall in love with her. This task proves much easier than it initially sounds, as the two are thrown together again and again on their journey. The more time she spends with her fellow travelers, the more Leah blossoms into who she really is and the harder it becomes to remember that Cyrus is her enemy, not her friend—or boyfriend. Leah and Cyrus are kindling sparking off each other as the flame of their love grows. Liang's prose is stunning, the book full of jaw-dropping descriptions of settings paired with incisive insights into the teen characters' psyches. Leah doesn't see herself clearly at all, and her first-person narration reflects this, but through nifty storytelling tricks, Liang is able to give readers an accurate image of our leading lady. By turns laugh-out-loud funny, achingly earnest, and deeply romantic, Liang's latest rom-com is a journey of self-discovery and self-love that is a true delight. *—Karis Rogerson*

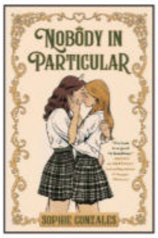


Nobody in Particular.

By Sophie Gonzales.

June 2025. 352p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $20 (9781250352491). Gr. 8–12.

Danni is starting over in a new country at a fancy new boarding school. After years of bullying in Colorado, she's excited to be moving to Henland with her mom and stepdad and to have received a music scholarship to a prestigious school for girls. There, she meets Molly, a new best friend who is dealing with a strained relationship with her friend Rose—the crown princess of Henland. As Danni and Rose become closer through their mutual friends, their attraction for each other grows. But Rose is shouldering the weight of a country, and Danni's biggest challenge is performing in front of her school. On top of that, Henland is a majority Catholic country, and Rose isn't out—nor does she think she ever will be. Readers will appreciate glimpses into each girl's perspective; watching Danni grow in confidence and Rose embrace who she really is while they fall in love with each other is a supremely satisfying journey. Their connection is palpable, and the pages crackle with chemistry. The work tackles the nuances of grief with empathy and emotion, allowing the teen characters to be imperfect in how they react to their trauma. Gonzales, who also touched on teenage fame in the cowritten *If This Gets Out* (2021), succeeds with this entry into the queer royal-romance canon. *—Karis Rogerson*

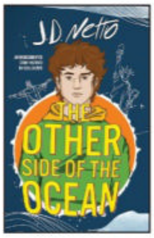


The Other Side of the Ocean.

By J. D. Netto.

June 2025. 280p. JAB, paper, $16.99 (9781625677204). Gr. 8–11.

Matthew, a 16-year-old high-school student, and his younger sister, Laila, are undocumented immigrants in the U.S. from Brazil, brought by their parents 10 years earlier after the sudden loss of the family business. Now, the siblings are thriving in school, and Matthew has a core group of friends, who are all also undocumented. New student James brings romance to the plot, as Matthew, who has known he was gay for much of his life, begins a relationship with him and falls in love. Matthew's homelife, however, grows turbulent when his mom loses her job due to not having the correct paper-



Continued on p.84

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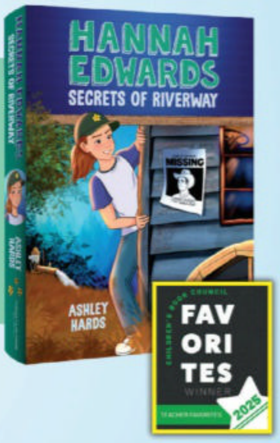

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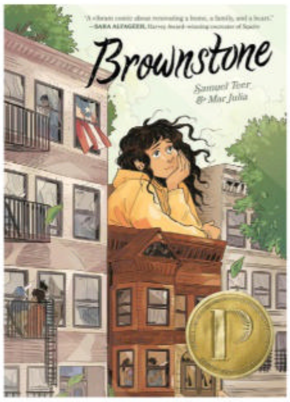
Read-alikes

The 2025 Printz Winners

MICHAEL L. PRINTZ AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

In its twenty-fifth year of recognizing excellence in young adult literature, the Michael L. Printz Awards, administered by ALA's Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) division and sponsored by *Booklist*, honored an impressively varied array of titles: in addition to the medal winner, *Brownstone*, by Samuel Teer and Mar Julia, honors went to Safia Elhillo's *Bright Red Fruit*, Andrew Joseph White's *Compound Fracture*, Molly Knox Ostertag's *The Deep Dark*, and Rex Ogle's *Road Home*. All of these authors will be honored this month at the 2025 Printz Award celebration on Friday, June 27, at 8 p.m., at ALA's Annual Conference in Philadelphia. For readers already entranced by the winner and honor books and looking for similar picks, read on for additional titles exploring related topics and themes.

Brownstone, by Samuel Teer, art by Mar Julia (Versify and HarperAlley)


"A vibrant comic about renovating a home, a family, and a heart."
—SARA ALFAGEEH, Harvey Award–winning creator of Sparks
Brownstone
Samuel Teer
& Mar Julia

After 15-year-old Almudena is left by her white mother to spend the summer with her estranged Guatemalan father, who doesn't speak English, she spends her days helping him repair a neighborhood brownstone. Themes of immigration, urban gentrification, religion, and homophobia are woven in as Almudena tackles the language barrier with her father and learns to love and appreciate the urban Latin American neighborhood that represents an unexplored half of her identity.

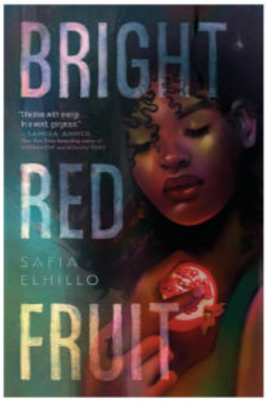
Read-alikes:

- **Juliet Takes a Breath.** By Gabby Rivera. Art by Celia Moscote. 2020. 176p. BOOM! Box (9781684156115). Gr. 10–12.
  In this graphic adaptation of the novel of the same name, Juliet has just come out as a lesbian to her skeptical Puerto Rican family before heading off to Portland, Oregon, for a summer internship with her favorite feminist author, who is white. What follows is a coming-of-age story that explores identity through race, gender, and sexuality.

- **The Magic Fish.** By Trung Le Nguyen. Art by the author. 2020. 256p. Random/RH Graphic (9780593125298). Gr. 8–12.
  In this homage to the power of storytelling, Tiến and his Vietnamese mother learn to communicate through a shared read-aloud. Three parallel stories tell of his struggle to come out as gay, of her immigration journey from war-torn Vietnam to the U.S., and of the fairy tale that allows them to connect.

- **Pride.** By Ibi Zoboi. 2018. 304p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray (9780062564047). Gr. 9–12.
  Zoboi's remix of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* deals in gentrification racism, love, culture, and heritage, all helmed by intelligent teens in Brooklyn. Zuri is proud of her Afro-Latino roots and her local Bushwick neighborhood, so when the wealthy Darcy family moves in next door, the last thing she expects is to fall for snobby Darius Darcy.

Bright Red Fruit, by Safia Elhillo (Random/Make Me a World)



Samira explores the online poetry scene after a rumor leaves her confined to her home, and she meets a man whose insidious charm leads her down a path of deception and heartbreak. But much like the tale of Persephone that drives this novel in verse, Elhillo has crafted a story that contains misery but ultimately harbors hope.

Read-alikes:

- **If You Knew My Name**. By Lisa Roberts Carter. 2024. 272p. Central Avenue (9781771683609). Gr. 9–12.
  Brilliantly accessible and widely appealing, this verse work focuses on Black high-school senior Mason, whose main aspiration in life is becoming a rapper. After his guidance counselor recommends a class on Black poetry, Mason's perspective shifts as he learns from his peers and teacher about race relations, affirmative action, and police shootings.

- **The Poet X**. By Elizabeth Acevedo. 2018. HarperTeen (9780062662804). Gr. 9–12.
  Xiomara is frustrated with her body, puberty drawing in unwanted attention that she channels into poetry. And when she joins the school slam-poetry club, she's ready to be heard. With plenty of awards of its own, Acevedo's debut in verse similarly speaks to the challenges of parental relationships, religious conservatism, and the stigma of slut-shaming around women.

- **Salt the Water**. By Candice Iloh. 2023. Dutton (9780593529317). Gr. 9–12.
  In this electric novel in verse, 17-year-old Cerulean faces multiple challenges in their overcrowded city school, grappling with racism, altercations with an unequipped teacher, and a broken public education system. Free-verse poetry pulsates with the protagonist's emotions and plenty of voice from side characters.

Compound Fracture, by Andrew Joseph White (Peachtree Teen)

In Twist Creek County, West Virginia, the Abernathys have been embroiled in a century-long blood feud. Subject to bullying and violence, trans and autistic Miles Abernathy finds strength in a local LGBTQ+ group and a deeper understanding of his family history. White eloquently explores economic injustice, poverty, corruption, and generational trauma in this taut, supernaturally tinged thriller that still shows love for rural West Virginia.

ANDREW JOSEPH WHITE
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
COMPOUND FRACTURE

Read-alikes:

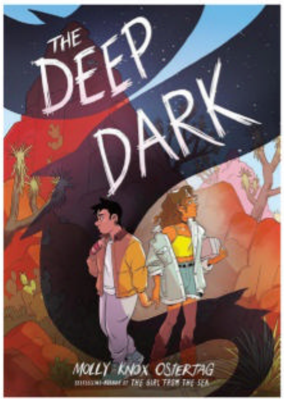
- **Bittersweet in the Hollow.** By Kate Pearsall. 2023. 384p. Putnam (9780593531020). Gr. 9–12.
  The James women have been purveyors of charms and folk magic for generations, though not everyone in their West Virginia town appreciates their gifts. Local lore entwines with James family history and a string of unexplained disappearances as 17-year-old Linden James endeavors to unravel multiple mysteries. As in *Compound Fracture*, the Appalachian setting shines, even in the face of unexpected horrors.

- **Dig.** By A. S. King. 2019. 416p. Dutton (9781101994917). Gr. 9–12.
  Generational abuse, dysfunction, and trauma touch five unknowingly connected teens in King's surreal novel, which takes a hard look at racism, white power and privilege, and class. This visceral examination of humanity's flaws and complexity nevertheless cultivates hope in a younger generation that's wiser and stronger than its predecessors.

- **Shampoo Unicorn.** By Sawyer Lovett. 2025. 320p. Disney/Hyperion (9781368108959). Gr. 9–12.
  Readers drawn to the queer community Miles finds in his rural southern town will embrace this character-driven novel set in small-town Canon, West Virginia. There, three teens (two gay, one trans) are brought together by a tragedy that results in an uplifting celebration of queerness in their town and across the country.

The Deep Dark, by Molly Knox Ostertag, art by the author (Scholastic/Graphix)

Soon-to-be high school graduate Mags is content with her routine of caretaker to her grandmother and diner work in the California desert, but the magical secrets Mags keeps to protect her friends and loved ones may be her undoing. Ostertag once again demonstrates her ability to build immersive and moving stories through this visually evocative tale.



Read-alikes:

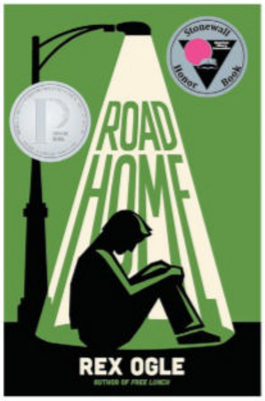
- **Blackwater**. By Jeannette Arroyo and Ren Graham. Art by the authors. 2022. 304p. Holt (9781250304025). Gr. 8–11.
  As popular hotshot Tony and reclusive Eli become unlikely friends, Tony grapples with a werewolf bite turned curse and Eli communes with ghosts trying to impart mysterious messages. In similar fashion to Ostertag, Arroyo and Graham craft a paranormal queer romance that emphasizes emotional intelligence.

- **Mooncakes**. By Suzanne Walker. Art by Wendy Xu. 2019. 256p. Oni (9781549303043). Gr. 8–12.
  Teen witch Nova has a similarly strong relationship with each of her grandmothers, who run a bookstore and manage their town's magical problems. After discovering a demon battling a wolf who turns out to be her childhood friend Tam, Nova agrees to help protect Tam from dark forces targeting their werewolf abilities.

- **Northranger**. By Rey Terciero. Art by Bre Indigo. 2023. 240p. HarperAlley (9780063007390). Gr. 9–12.
  Cade finds himself on the opposite side of Mags, curious of the dark secrets his crush Henry holds. When Cade is wrangled into spending the summer working on a ranch, he grows close to heir to the Tyler ranch Henry in this modern, queer adaptation of *Northanger Abbey*.

Road Home, by Rex Ogle (Norton Young Readers)

Adept memoirist Ogle recounts his experiences living on the streets of New Orleans after his father kicks him out for being gay. In precise, evocative language that never sensationalizes his experiences, he sharply draws a picture of how quickly a precarious living situation can irrevocably shatter, the vulnerabilities faced especially by homeless LGBTQIA teens, and the emotional toll of enduring an unsupportive family.



Read-alikes:

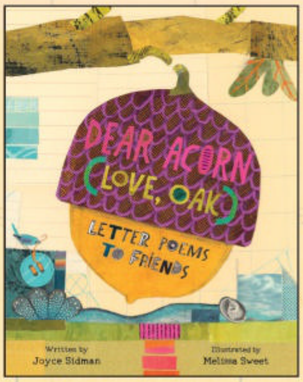
- **Brave Face.** By Shaun David Hutchinson. 2019. 368p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse (9781534431515). Gr. 8–12.
  Like Ogle, Hutchinson dealt with depression and suicidal ideation as he weighed coming out to his family, and his memoir similarly describes in illuminating, poignant detail the distress queer teens feel when they live with families or in communities that are openly hostile to their identities.

- **Gem & Dixie.** By Sara Zarr. 2017. 288p. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray (9780062434593). Gr. 9–12.
  Sisters Gem and Dixie find a backpack full of money in their estranged father's room and use it to run away from their unstable home. As they struggle to figure out what to do next as the money quickly dwindles, Gem's worried, measured voice illuminates the difficulties of feeling trapped in true poverty.

- **No Parking at the End Times.** By Bryan Bliss. 2015. 272p. Greenwillow (9780062275417). Gr. 9–12.
  Abigail's parents, lured in by a huckster doomsday preacher, are living in a van in San Francisco awaiting the prophesied end of the world. With deep compassion and insight, Bliss details Abigail's constant effort to find baseline essentials like food and her struggle to square her own belief in God with her parents' overzealous religious conviction, especially when they give up on her brother when he desperately needs help.

FANTASTIC FALL BOOKS

CLARION BOOKS


DEAR ACORN (LOVE, OAK)
LETTER POEMS TO FRIENDS
Written by Joyce Sidman
Illustrated by Melissa Sweet

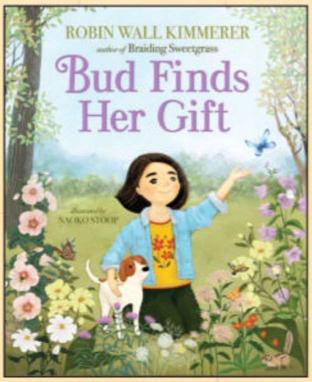
By JOYCE SIDMAN
Illustrated by
MELISSA SWEET
SEPTEMBER

GREENWILLOW BOOKS

CAT NAP
BRIAN LIES

By BRIAN LIES
SEPTEMBER

ALLIDA


ROBIN WALL KIMMERER
author of Braiding Sweetgrass
Bud Finds Her Gift
Illustrated by NAOKO STOOP

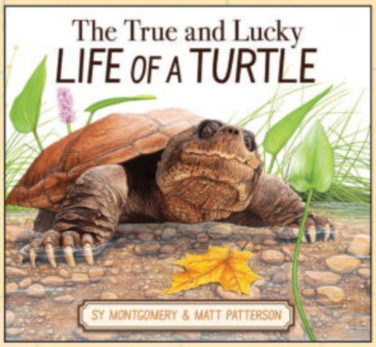
By ROBIN WALL KIMMERER
Illustrated by
NAOKO STOOP
SEPTEMBER

CLARION BOOKS

If You Make a Call on a Banana Phone
Gideon Sterer
Emily Hughes

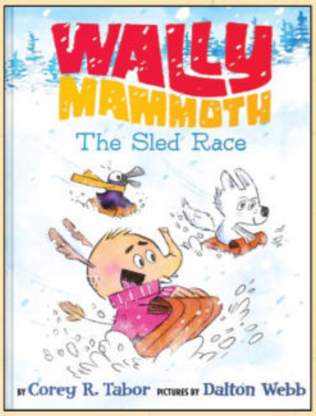
By GIDEON STERER
Illustrated by
EMILY HUGHES
SEPTEMBER

CLARION BOOKS


The True and Lucky
LIFE OF A TURTLE
SY MONTGOMERY & MATT PATTERSON

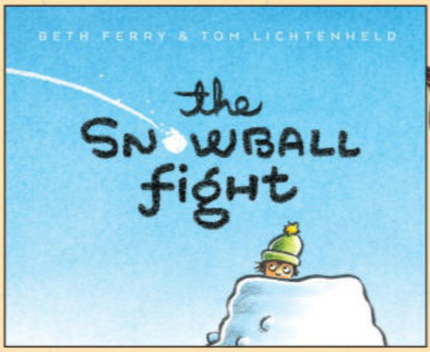
By SY MONTGOMERY
Illustrated by
MATT PATTERSON
SEPTEMBER

GREENWILLOW BOOKS


WALLY MAMMOTH
The Sled Race
BY Corey R. Tabor PICTURES BY Dalton Webb

By COREY R. TABOR
Illustrated by
DALTON WEBB
SEPTEMBER

CLARION BOOKS


BETH FERRY & TOM LICHTENHELD
the SNOWBALL fight

By BETH FERRY
Illustrated by
TOM LICHTENHELD
NOVEMBER

CLARION BOOKS

"NOTHING SHORT OF A TRIUMPH." —RICK RIORDAN
NIC BLAKE AND THE REMARKABLES
THE BOOK OF ANANSI
ANGIE THOMAS

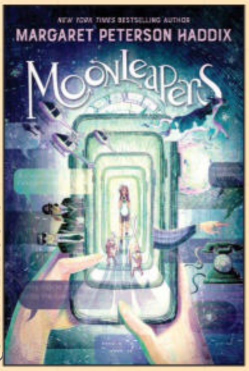
By ANGIE THOMAS
SEPTEMBER

CLARION BOOKS

BRANDY COLBERT
Let's Get TOGETHER

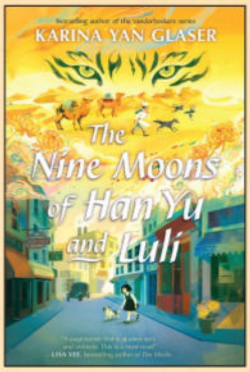
By BRANDY COLBERT
SEPTEMBER

QUILL TREE BOOKS


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX
MOONLEAPERS

By MARGARET
PETERSON HADDIX
SEPTEMBER

ALLIDA


KARINA YAN GLASER
The Nine Moons of Han Yu and Luli

By KARINA YAN GLASER
SEPTEMBER

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ND STEVENSON
bestselling author of NIMONA
SCARLET MORNING

QUILL TREE BOOKS

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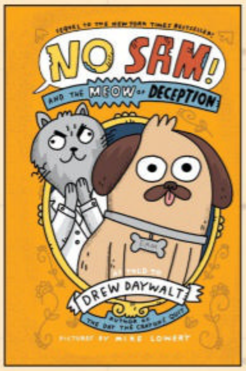
GOALKEEPER
EDWARD BLOOR
The sequel to the modern-day classic TANGERINE

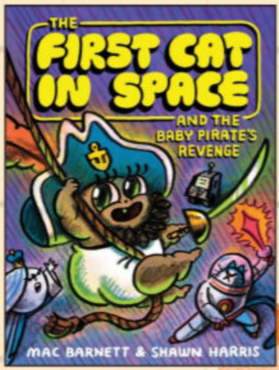
CLARION BOOKS

By EDWARD BLOOR
OCTOBER


NO SAM!
AND THE MEOW OF DECEPTION
DREW DAYWALT

STORYTIDE

By DREW DAYWALT
Illustrated by
MIKE LOWERY
OCTOBER


THE FIRST CAT IN SPACE
AND THE BABY PIRATE'S REVENGE
MAC BARNETT & SHAWN HARRIS

HARPERALLEY

By MAC BARNETT
Illustrated by
SHAWN HARRIS
NOVEMBER

All the Way Around the Sun
XIXI TIAN

QUILL TREE BOOKS

By XIXI TIAN
SEPTEMBER

EXQUISITE THINGS
One kiss can last lifetimes
Stonewall Award winning author
ABDI NAZEMIAN

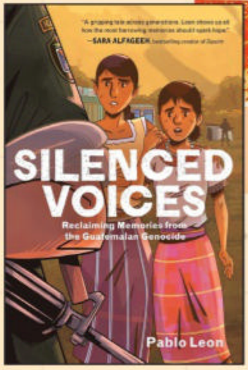
HARPER

By ABDI NAZEMIAN
SEPTEMBER

THE GOLDEN BOY'S GUIDE TO BIPOLAR
SONORA REYES

HARPER

By SONORA REYES
SEPTEMBER


SILENCED VOICES
Reclaiming Memories from the Guatemalan Genocide
Pablo Leon

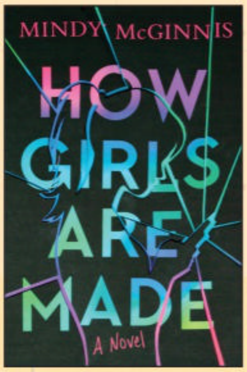
HARPER ALLEY

By PABLO LEON
SEPTEMBER

THORN SEASON
KIERA AZAR

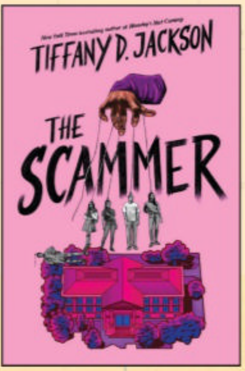
STORYTIDE

By KIERA AZAR
SEPTEMBER


MINDY McGINNIS
HOW GIRLS ARE MADE
A Novel

HARPER

By MINDY MCGINNIS
OCTOBER


TIFFANY D. JACKSON
THE SCAMMER

QUILL TREE BOOKS

By TIFFANY D. JACKSON
OCTOBER

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HarperCollins Children's School & Library

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Continued from p.78

work, causing Matthew's dad to start drinking heavily and become physically violent. His mom asks for a divorce, and she, Matthew, and Laila decide together that they need to go back to Brazil. Drawing from events in his own life, Netto infuses the narrative with heartbreaking realness. While primarily a romance, this novel's observations on immigration and citizenship seem more relevant and realistic with each passing day. That said, it's worth mentioning that the book ends on an extremely hopeful note with the introduction of DACA and a high-school graduation. Recommend to readers searching for realistic LGBTQ+ romance novels and fans of Jenny Torres Sanchez's *We Are Not from Here* (2020). *—Joel Shoemaker*

Pretty Girl County.

By Lakita Wilson.

July 2025. 320p. Viking, $19.99 (9780593525647). Gr. 8–12.

Sommer and Reya were best friends until Reya's mom's stint on *The Real Housewives of Potomac* had them dashing away to a life of glitz and glam. Now, with Sommer trying to figure out how she'll afford tuition at Spelman and Reya zipping around in a fancy car, the two seem worlds apart. But their love for fashion will bring them back together. Reya needs help putting together a fashion show that will surely get her off the waitlist at the Fashion Institute of Technology, and Sommer's custom designs are the missing piece. With the promise of extra income, Sommer can't turn down the opportunity, so the two find themselves navigating each other's world while determining if their friendship is worth reigniting. The excitement of new love and all the challenges associated with relationships take the spotlight in this striking read. Reya and Sommer both experience growth, and each teen's choices demonstrate maturity and selflessness. Bibliophiles will especially appreciate the bookstore backdrop and the many nods to well-known authors. *—Amber Hayes*

You're out of Luck Alina Butt
Ambreen Butt-Hussain
The Unlovable Alina Butt
Gregor Craigie
SAVING WOLFGANG
Dear Papa
MY SUMMER CAMP HAS MEGA SLOTHS
Rebecca Wood Barrett
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This Book Might Be about Zinnia.

By Brittney Morris.

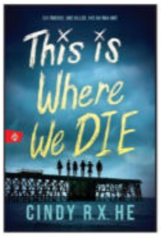
July 2025. 288p. Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (9781665904018). Gr. 8–12.

In Morris' first work of contemporary realism, two Philadelphia high-school seniors navigate mother-daughter conflict and parentage secrets through alternating points of view. On prom night, 2024, biracial Zinnia's best friend, Milo, gifts her the latest book by her favorite author, Jodelle Rae West, which is a novel that appears to be a thinly veiled retelling of Zinnia's origins. Could Jodelle be her birth mother? Given her white adoptive mother's stalker-level helicopter parenting, Zinnia is excited to investigate. In 2006, Tuesday, who is Black, struggles to recover after giving up her baby for adoption, with the added pressure of her own mother's harsh treatment. When Tuesday learns that the boy who fathered her baby is a member of a dangerous mafia family, she fears for her daughter's safety. The mystery of how these time lines connect propels the story, though the work struggles with tone and realistic characterization. Similarities between Zinnia and Tuesday's barista jobs and musical tastes help to hold the otherwise disjointed narrative together. Throughout, Morris tackles privilege, support and neglect in teen friendship, perfectionism, and biracial adoption. *—Angela Carstensen*

This Is Where We Die.

By Cindy R. X. He.

July 2025. 336p. Sourcebooks/Fire, $12.99 (9781728293424). Gr. 8–12.



After surviving an avalanche 18 months prior, six friends helicopter to an exclusive island retreat, complete with a glass mansion, to celebrate their high-school graduation. Paradise quickly turns into nightmare fuel, however, when they are hunted by someone who knows what secrets they thought were buried back in the snow. This psychological thriller will leave the reader gasping for air and glaring into the mind of a vengeful killer. Trigger warnings tell the reader what sort of tale to expect, with good reason; themes of survival, cannibalism (largely off-page), and violence pervade. Told from ever-decreasing points of view, the book is also interspersed with breaks consisting of text messages from outside perspectives after the weekend away, keeping the suspense high. Several homages to the golden age of detective fiction find themselves at home here (the secluded estate, an ensemble of suspects, dark and stormy nights, etc.). The tension builds slowly, allowing the individual characters to develop, before reaching a terrifying pitch. The irony of staying in an actual glass house while throwing stones of denial and accusation at one another adds an extra layer to this multifaceted tale. A page-turner that will leave the reader wondering if the ending was preventable or inevitable. —*Jessica Durham*

This Side of Falling.

By Eunice Chan.

June 2025. 272p. Soho Teen, $19.99 (9781641295178). Gr. 9–12.

Things were complicated with Ethan before—now they're even more complicated. Following his suicide, Nina is left wondering if she really ever knew Ethan at all, and the questions keep piling up when her golden-girl sister, Carmen, unexpectedly returns from college. Now Nina must piece together the reality of who Ethan was if she wants to understand how she got here. In her debut, Chan tackles grief and complicated family dynamics touched by addiction and secrets. As Nina navigates life post-Ethan, her routines and focus are disrupted by sadness and a desperation to understand what happened. This adeptly weaves in authentic complexities of the world continuing to turn even in the face of a brutal loss. Most characters are depicted as Chinese and Japanese American. Emotional and introspective, this will find fans in readers who enjoyed Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places* (2015) and similar character-driven works focused on mental health, grief, and the ripples left by teens who take their own lives. —*Abby Hargreaves*

The Tournament.

By Rebecca Barrow.

June 2025. 416p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $21.99 (9781665932301). Gr. 9–12.

Mean Girls gets a queer, BIPOC, dark academia update in this engrossing thriller about a school where girls are taught to survive and thrive, by whatever means necessary. Senior year at the Gardner-Bahnsen School for Girls should have three things: friends, Ivy-League applications, and the annual Tierney Cup. When ex–best friends Max and Nora, along with newcomer Teddy, compete in the yearly tournament, tensions rise, expectations shatter, and boundaries evaporate. All three narrators read as Black and lesbian, and privilege seeps out of the woodwork at Gardner due to the mostly upper-crust student body; the students' language, though, happily disregards any traditional notion of politeness. The plot gallops along, sometimes too quickly, zigging when the reader *knows* it will zag. The romantic entanglements are necessarily complicated; the characters are teenagers, after all. The somewhat one-dimensional secondary characters aside, the main three come across beautifully through deep introspective looks at their lives, emotions, and possible futures. With an ending that makes the reader question any belief in basic goodness, *The Tournament* will leave a lasting impression. —*Jessica Durham*

Water in Her Veins.

By Shannon Schuren.

Aug. 2025. 368p. Viking, $19.99 (9780593621431). Gr. 8–12.

Before Lola was born, her father died in a car accident and left her his childhood home. Now 16, Lola, her mother, and her stepfather, Kurt, move from Michigan to Clarett Creek, Colorado, taking up residence in the inherited house. She's able to attend school in person (despite a mysterious chronic illness that causes lethargy, migraines, and lightheadedness), and she makes a handful of friends, all of whom surprisingly have some kind of connection to her new house or her father. Lola tends to tune out any talk of ghosts until she starts having visions of memories that are clearly not her own. As Lola digs into the history of the area to better understand the visions, it's clear that someone doesn't want her to know the town's secrets. The book is part mystery, part thriller, and the plot moves briskly, incorporating distinctly fleshed-out side characters in Lola's friendships. Lola is also sympathetically written—not because she is ill, but because she won't let her illness get in the way of the truth. An engaging, multigenerational mystery. —*Donna Scanlon*

Middle Readers

Bubblegum Shoes: The Case of the Contraband Closet.

By Goldy Moldavsky.

July 2025. 224p. Random, $17.99 (9780593813768). Gr. 4–7.

Seventh-grader Maya Mendoza knows what it's like to get in trouble, so it's no surprise when she lands in detention. There, she sits with her ex-BFF Jordan, rich-girl Clementine, and good-girl Ava. Maya makes a deal with Principal Spade: if she helps him solve his mystery, then he will grant all the girls their freedom. The great mystery involves the Contraband Closet, a space where teachers have stashed items confiscated from students over the past several decades. Inventory varies from a seized cell phone to an ear-piercing gun to firecrackers, and even a rumored Academy Award. When the closet is found to be empty, Maya and her detention crew work through the clues to see where the items have gone. The girls learn all about the school's skeletons, including a secret card-trading ring and a spray-paint graffiti artist, as they narrow down the suspects. Typical middle-school drama is peppered into the *Harriet the Spy*–level sleuthing, though the relationship issues and tropes will still be relatable for older elementary-school students. —*Diana Ford*

Chess Club: The Winning Move.

By Rebecca Donnelly. Illus. by Isabelle Duffy.

June 2025. 208p. Farrar, $19.99 (9781250328588). Gr. 3–6.

Halima, Jem, Parker, and Daniel might not seem like they have much in common. At first, they don't. But when Halima starts a chess club, her best friend, Jem, steps up to recruit people. The four club members' friendship grows, as do their chess skills. Each has their own motivation and backstory for joining the club, as well as their own challenges to face. Yet, like chess, each is part of the whole, and the middle-schoolers learn to work together as a team. Duffy's intermittent illustrations offer insight into playing chess, clarifying pieces and rules for readers who may be less familiar with the game. Donnelly's character work shines, as chapters shift among the club members' POVs. Each character is well crafted with relatable concerns, obstacles, and fears—from Daniel's friendship struggles to Jem's joy at finding queer community to Parker's desire to stand out in a family of all-stars to Halima's desire to help others love chess like she does. A realistic portrayal of middle school with a focus on friendship, community, and healthy relationships. —*Christine Hartman Derr*

Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody: The Hat of Great Importance.

By Patrick Ness. Illus. by Tim Miller.

June 2025. 208p. Candlewick/Walker, $18.99 (9781536241266). Gr. 3–5.

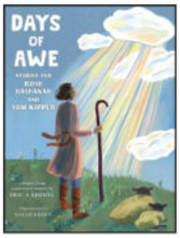
Ness and Miller continue to explore the challenges of friendship and trust in this sequel to *The Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody* (2024). Monitor lizard Zeke is one of only three lizards at his recently integrated school, but neither being a hall monitor nor having recently defeated a supervillain is boosting his popularity. When his lizard friend Daniel shows up wearing a hat (a fashion normally reserved for the school's bird clique), Zeke gets nervous. How will the other students treat Daniel, Zeke, and their fellow lizard friend Alicia? What does the new exchange student, a fish named Peggy, think of Daniel's hat? Can the new guidance counselor be trusted? And who keeps firing a Death Ray of Death at Zeke's house? Miller's droll, expressive cartoons add to the wry atmosphere. Smart, funny, whimsical, and full of heart, this speaks directly to middle-grade readers' concerns about fitting in, keeping friendships, and navigating the world's unfairness despite well-meaning adults who haven't a clue. —*Dani Ryskamp*

Days of Awe: Stories for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

By Eric A. Kimmel and Sarah Green.

Sept. 2025. 40p. illus. Holiday, $18.99 (9780823456550). Gr. 3–5.

At first glance, the three stories in this new edition of prolific Jewish children's author Kimmel's *Days of Awe* (first published in 1991) have little to do with Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur; the holidays are not even mentioned in all the stories. However, introductory material connects each story to one of the traditional High Holiday themes of teshuvah (repentance), tzedakah (charity), and tefillah (prayer). In one story, a samovar from a mysterious stranger brightens and brings good luck to a couple, who—once their own needs are met—shares their fortune with those in need. Another tale shows how a shepherd's unorthodox but heartfelt prayers of love for God are echoed by the angels in heaven. In the final story, a famous rabbi insists on seeking forgiveness from a man whose appearance he has insulted. Kimmel makes the stories his own, although he notes that the original versions date from the ancient and medieval periods. Green's new illustrations capture the flavor of historic Jewish communities from Eastern Europe ("The Samovar") to Córdoba, Spain ("The Shepherd"), to ancient Israel ("Rabbi Eleazar and the Beggar"), bringing in another layer of tradition. A timeless story collection that is wonderful to have back in print. —*Miriam Aronin*



Ella Josephine: Resident in Charge.

By Nina LaCour. Illus. by Sònia Albert.

June 2025. 148p. Chronicle, $14.99 (9781797213743). Gr. 2–4.

LaCour adds three more stories to the charming world of Ella Josephine Norwood in this sequel to *The Apartment House on Poppy Hill* (2023). In the first, "Identity Crisis," Ella comes to the aid of one of the house's newest residents, Cleo, whose move to San Francisco has left her feeling unmoored and homesick. Next, and perhaps most exciting, comes "The Empty Space," in which Ella discovers a door to an unused room in the apartment house and achieves her dream of calling an apartment meeting to inform residents about its existence. Ella puts her house knowledge and organizational skills to good use in "Dinner Party," after being recruited by the overwhelmed party host. It is a joy to spend time in the community that has blossomed among the Poppy Hill apartment residents, and though life in 1106 Wildflower Place may not always be perfect, it is always welcoming, respectful, and kind. Ella's small adventures afford her time to think and grow, and her self-assurance and compassionate nature will inspire young readers. —*Julia Smith*

Evie and Rhino.

By Neridah McMullin. Illus. by Astred Hicks.

June 2025. 272p. Walker Australia, $18.99 (9781761600302). Gr. 4–7.

Frances Hodgson Burnett meets Katherine Applegate in McMullin's moving Australian-set animal tale that folds readers into the late nineteenth century and the life of Evie, a mute 10-year-old. Evie's been silent since the shipwreck two years before that took her parents' lives, which means she's had a lot of time to wander and read at the run-down estate she and her grandfather call home. After a torrent of rain, Evie discovers a rhinoceros, of all things, on the beach near their home. Like any daughter of a veterinarian with an empty stable, she brings it home. But there were other animals on the storm-tossed ship that brought Rhino to her shores, and there are those who want Rhino caged at a zoo rather than roaming freely. Full of heart and soul with exquisite prose that invites readers to feel the historical moment, *Evie and Rhino* offers a unique moment in time to readers who love stories that center animal care and standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. —*Aryssa Damron*

Incredibly Penelope.

By Lauren Myracle.

Aug. 2025. 304p. Candlewick/Walker, $18.99 (9781536206067). Gr. 4–7.

Myracle's riches-to-rags, modern retelling of *A Little Princess* paints a robust portrait of spoiled Penelope, who has been raised by her mother and reality-star godmother, Queenie Bee. After years of galivanting around the globe, Penelope finally gets to go to a boarding school, where she quickly learns her godmother's fame is getting her more attention than she anticipated, including from the wealth-aspiring headmistress. When her mother and godmother go missing on a treasure hunt, Penelope is plunged from the highest echelons of the school to the rat-filled basement, from which she emerges to clean up after her former classmates and carry out the whims of the mean headmistress. The narrative's pacing focuses primarily on the times of wealth for Penelope, and confident readers will enjoy the specificity of Penelope's privileged lifestyle and boarding school. However, Myracle struggles to balance the story as a whole, and the plot suffers at the expense of the splendor. This take on Burnett's beloved novel will nevertheless charm readers enamored with reimagined classics and stories of the rich and famous. —*Aryssa Damron*

Kickturn.

By Brie Spangler. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 192p. Knopf, $17.99 (9780593707814). Gr. 3–6.

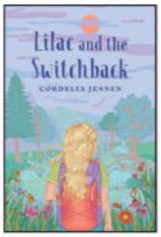
Lindy lives on a bus, traveling to national parks with her yoga-Instagramming mother and former-business-owning father as they try to gain followers and monetize their lifestyle. This leaves Lindy friendless and failing fifth grade through self-taught PowerPoints and bewildering computer lessons. When the bus gets stuck in San Jose, however, Lindy finally has a chance to stick around a town for a few weeks and make a couple of real-life friends, including a famous eight-year-old skateboarder with her own Nike deals and two others who help her learn all the tricks to thrive at the neighborhood skate park. Overjoyed with having new friends and a place to skate, Lindy sabotages the bus and landlocks her family, for better or worse. Printed to resemble Lindy's journal, with notebook-lined paper and frequent hand-drawn illustrations, the story will be perfect for reluctant readers in elementary and middle school. Skateboarders and fans of Dork Diaries or Meg Cabot's *From the Notebooks of a Middle School Princess* (2015) will especially relish Spangler's latest. —*Joel Shoemaker*

Lilac and the Switchback.

By Cordelia Jensen.

Aug. 2025. 304p. Holiday, $17.99 (9780823458325). Gr. 4–8.

Since her mother's death years prior, Lilac has been living with her uncle, aunt, and cousin. With tight budgets and small spaces, Lilac worries she's an "extra" in this family, a concern that intensifies when her aunt and uncle announce they're pregnant with twins. Worse, her best friend, Callie, is growing increasingly closer with Charla, Lilac's temperamental cousin. Lilac begins finding her own way, first by joining the Trailblazers club and making new friends, and then by reaching out to her absent father. From soccer to Judaism to English breakfast tea, Lilac plumbs her father's interests and dives into trying to build a relationship with him, all while keeping their correspondence secret. With her beloved aunt on bed rest due to pre-eclampsia, Lilac fears upsetting her by asking difficult questions. This well-paced narrative depicts the struggle of changing friendships, keeping secrets, complicated families, and feeling superfluous. Thoroughly developed characters and their complex relationships populate this world. Particularly poignant is Lilac's relationship with Charla, as the line between cousins and siblings has been blurred since Lilac's mother's death. Told in verse, this tender story unpacks what it means to be a family while exploring the long-term effects of grief, ultimately offering the hope of healing. —*Christine Hartman Derr*

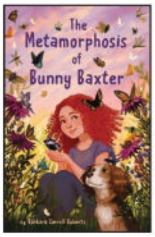


The Metamorphosis of Bunny Baxter.

By Barbara Carroll Roberts.

July 2025. 240p. Holiday/Margaret Ferguson, $18.99 (9780823458561). Gr. 5–8.

Thanks to redistricting, Bunny Baxter has to start seventh grade at a new school this year, despite the fact that all her friends get to stay together at Wade's Run Middle School. Bunny's anxiety is spiking at the prospect of being the new kid, especially since her height (very tall) and hair ("flaming-red" curls) make it impossible to fade into the crowd. Believing (incorrectly) that if she gets kicked out



of her new school, she'll get to attend Wade's Run instead, Bunny starts trying to get herself expelled. Unsurprisingly, the scheme doesn't work as Bunny hopes, but she gradually learns how to make friends and find her place at E. D. Britt Middle. This novel is perfect for any anxious middle-schooler, who will not only relate to Bunny's struggles but learn about using "box-breathing," which she uses repeatedly throughout, to calm anxieties. Roberts (*Nikki on the Line*, 2019) adds further complexity to Bunny's evolving character by beautifully incorporating complicated emotions that come from being adopted—not to mention the girl's endearing love of bugs and gardening. Readers who enjoy character-driven stories will readily find a friend in Bunny Baxter, as will fans of Jamie Sumner and Barbara Dee. —*Joel Shoemaker*

★ Peachaloo in Bloom.
By Chris Raschka. Illus. by the author.

July 2025. 304p. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823458554). Gr. 5–7.

Peachaloo in Bloom
Chris Raschka

Raschka draws on his inner teen and grown-up as well as his inner child for this wry tale of a town whose values and customs are threatened by a ruthless real-estate developer. The last member of the Jumpers, a celibate Shaker-like commune whose members substituted jumping rope for sex (or, as they called it, "canoodling"), has sold her estate just outside the Pennsylvania town of Fourwords. Enter the aptly named Major Gasbag, a sneering wheeler-dealer who fences off the grounds and pond the villagers had always been free to use in order to build a private country club. The strength of small-town stories like this is nearly always in the cast, and here the author ropes in a lively one, pitting Gasbag against 12-year-old summer visitor Peachaloo Piccolozampa at the head of a supporting group that ranges from her indomitable grandmother Helena to a mysterious pair of bank robbers disguised as men. The plot is enriched by jump-rope rhymes, a climactic natural disaster, and enough meticulously detailed rehearsal and performance scenes for a town play to satisfy the most rabid young thespians. Still, it's Peachaloo—able to hear what people really mean underneath what they say—who really owns this beguiling story, and who is left at the end floating in the restored pond, thinking big thoughts. Fourwords' small-town characters and character come alive in the frequent black-and-white sketches. —*John Peters*

Snoop.
By Gordan Korman.

July 2025. 208p. Scholastic, $18.99 (9781546126089). Gr. 4–7.

After a ski-slope collision leaves 12-year-old Carter with two broken legs, he finds himself grounded for weeks. His mother points out that if he hadn't been checking his cell phone just prior to the collision, he might have seen his little brother coming and avoided the accident. His parents have taken away his access to "assorted devices" for the duration of his confinement. Stuck at home with his little brother, Carter discovers "public safely feeds," videos created by cameras in set locations, that run day and night. Convinced that he has discovered a criminal gang that imports endangered animals, Carter contacts the police, who scoff at him. Ultimately, Carter leaves the house one night in his wheelchair to confront the enemy on his own. Known for his first-person narratives of sympathetic kids and teens in challenging situations, Korman introduces readers to another smart, likable protagonist who is doing the best he can despite significant obstacles. Droll humor enlivens the story as Carter considers and reconsiders his options before finally taking action. An engaging, enjoyable novel. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Someone's Gonna End Up Crying.
By Jo Knowles. Illus. by Glynnis Fawkes.

2025. 304p. Candlewick, $19.99 (9781536231274). Gr. 4–7.

Maple is a fifth-grader with two older siblings and parents on the cusp of divorce. She copes by talking to her namesake (a maple tree in

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the backyard), drawing comics, and dreaming about a long-promised but never-delivered tree house. School brings its own stresses, primarily in the form of timed testing, which is a struggle for Maple. Simply put, she has a lot going on, but strong friendships and art help her through her struggles. Knowles has created a delightful story for upper-elementary and middle-grade students, albeit one that is dramatic and emotionally difficult in spots. The illustrations, though not quite as frequent as one might hope, are wonderful and offer glimpses into Maple's sketchbook, showing her setting the world to rights as Captain Ladybug and creating Dadlandia—the place she tells herself her dad goes when he leaves after fighting with her mom. The ending is happy, though it isn't tidy, nor should it be. For readers struggling through divorce or having a hard time in school, Maple's story will resonate. —*Joel Shoemaker*

Spark.
By Chris Baron.

July 2025. 320p. Feiwel and Friends, $17.99 (9781250864741). Gr. 4–8.

SPARK
CHRIS BARON

This stunning novel in verse shows the impact of climate change and wildfires and the struggle of living on the border between the forest and urban areas. Finn lives in a small community, the kind where his tree house can be connected to his friends' houses by a string and pulley to allow for note-passing. Though their neighborhood seems idyllic, there is friction: Jonah's dad is behind a big development project that is bringing jobs but taking away part of the forest. Finn, whose dad needs one of those jobs, is pulled between what he believes to be right and his father's needs. Meanwhile, Finn's best friend, Rabbit, knows the dangers this development will cause—especially now, during the height of fire season, when plumes of smoke are visible all around. When the fires come too close to home, forcing evacuations in Finn's community, the people and their town may never be the same. Baron balances the emotional weight of trauma by showing characters healing in a variety of ways. Returning wildlife serves as a promise of regrowth and possibility for a different kind of future. Beginning before the fires, continuing through evacuation, and including the season of rebuilding, *Spark* highlights the impact of wildfires alongside the importance of healing, all while nourishing the brightest spark of all, hope. —*Christine Hartman Derr*

Young

Angel Draws a Dinosaur.
By Pavonis Giron. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 40p. Holt, $18.99 (9781250874375). PreS–Gr. 1.

Inspired by a recent museum trip that leaves his mind teeming with dinosaurs, Angel is sure he can draw a museum-caliber dino—"'An absolute masterpiece.'" At home, he gathers his art supplies, excited to bring his vision to life, but as he draws one picture after another, disappointment and frustration creep in. He isn't happy with any of his dinosaurs. The eyes are not perfect. The spines are not perfect. Why can't he draw the perfect dinosaur? Defeated, Angel cries to his mothers. Mom and Mama comfort the boy, reminding him that "art should be fun, not perfect." Bolstered by their encouragement and a fresh perspective, Angel goes back to his artwork and begins to see pieces he likes. He cuts the pieces out and collages together a brand-new dinosaur. It's perfect! This is a wonderful story about perseverance and finding beauty in the imperfect. Illustrations in an appealing candy-colored palette depict the beautiful racial and gender diversity of Angel's family as well as the boy's strong emotions and childlike artwork. Relatable and encouraging. —*Rosie Camargo*

Becoming Boba.
By Joanna Ho. Illus. by Amber Ren.

June 2025. 40p. Scholastic, $18.99 (9781339005546). PreS–Gr. 2.

A quaint little town "steeped in tradition" and populated by traditionally brown milk tea residents is disrupted by the arrival of an unusually colored little milk tea named Mindy. In an attempt to avoid being the town's

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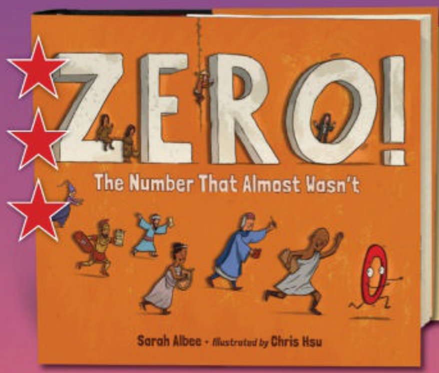
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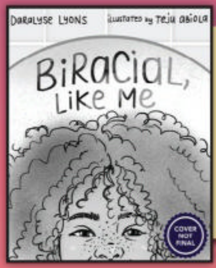
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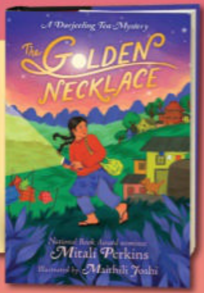
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alleged downfall, Mindy studies diligently to be just as classically milk tea as all the grown-ups. Through her efforts, Mindy begins to realize what it really means to be “milk tea enough.” With the help of her friends, Mindy shares the town residents’ rich and diverse histories, showing that appearances aside, everyone has a little bit of milk tea in them. Author Ho cleverly uses bubble tea as a vehicle for conversations about race and ethnicity, with Mindy’s journey of self-discovery creating an educational opportunity for the whole community. When combined with Ren’s colorful digital illustrations, Ho’s story sends a wonderful message about how individual differences are what make society stronger. The book concludes with a short history lesson on the origin of bubble tea, or boba, plus notes from the author and illustrator. —*Eori Tokunaga*

Best Buds.

By Becky Scharnhost. Illus. by Jiarui Jiang.

July 2025. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, $19.99 (9781665960939). PreS–Gr. 3.

As Spencer and his mother move their belongings into their new home in a new town, he wonders why she’s so concerned about whether he’ll make new friends. After all, Spencer has brought his *old* friends (all potted plants) with him. They might not be as talkative as Spencer, but they’re great listeners. He’s pleased to find a new houseplant in a box labeled “Free plants” outside their new house. Everywhere he goes, he meets another amiable plant and takes it home. He’s collected more than 20 when he meets an interesting girl named Daisy at the park, where she’s talking with her friend Raymond, a tiny caterpillar. With so much in common, Spencer and Daisy quickly become friends. This engaging picture book quietly celebrates Spencer’s independence and resourcefulness as he takes a firm stand on befriending plants, which return his affection in their own, easygoing way. His watchful, patient mother lets him find his own path to friendship. Detailed and richly colorful digital art illustrates the narrative, which flows well and comes to a satisfying conclusion. —*Carolyn Phelan*

The Biggest Dog in the Book.

By Ben Lerwill. Illus. by Mark Chambers.

June 2025. 32p. DK, $17.99 (9780593965405). PreS–Gr. 1.

Sometimes size does matter, but this cheery riff on a sequential concept book shows the early elementary set that it all evens out in the end. “Agnes is a Chihuahua. She likes cuddles, cushions, and going on walks. She is NOT the biggest dog in the book.” Magnus the dachshund is bigger than Agnes, Popcorn the beagle is bigger still, and even Sid, a sausage-loving bloodhound, dwarfs all those pooches but is still not the biggest dog in the book. Eleven wide-eyed dogs (and one turtle) later, readers’ mounting suspense is satisfied as the pack merrily accumulates for a park playdate to reveal a gentle giant whose greatest joy “is playing with his friends!” Brightly toned illustrations keep visual momentum moving forward, while direct text in varying font sizes cues emphasis and injects a few wisecracks to break up the dogs’ accrual. A high-energy pick for pet owners and a good storytime pairing for Kevin Sherry’s *I’m the Biggest Thing in the Ocean* (2007) or Emily Gravett’s *10 Dogs* (2023). —*Kit Ballenger*

Blue.

By Suzanne Kaufman. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 48p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316311663). PreS–K.

A spindle-legged heron helps a child’s dreams come true as the pair spends an ebullient day splashing and soaring together. Galoshes on, a curly-haired explorer comes toe-to-toe with a great blue heron at sunrise: “I tiptoe, rush . . . and pause,” the boy says, drawing alongside the heron in the water. Together, they “shriek, splash . . . and share” snacks, playing the day away. Blue flies off at sunset but returns after dark “with a swoosh, swoop, and quiet settle.” With the boy atop Blue’s back, they soar “above campfires and shooting stars” on a moonlit journey before saying “good night but not goodbye.” Spare, descriptive language suits the streamlined palette of the illustrations, which feature the joyous protagonist and avian playmate in a foamy surf with various coastal cues. The child’s bedroom reveals bird-infatuated touches including costume wings, a mobile, and a clearly beloved stuffed animal, inviting the reader to decide whether the day’s adventure was real or imagined. A whimsical wish-fulfillment tale for any child whose loves loom larger than life. —*Kit Ballenger*

Boar and Hedgehog.

By David Elliott. Illus. by Eugene Yelchin.

June 2025. 40p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536228717). K–Gr. 2.

Boar is a frowny, growly, grunty crank, content with a solitary existence in his cold, dark cave—until Hedgehog wanders by and wonders if Boar might be happier in a sunnier spot. Boar tells him off, but after another damp night, he shifts his lair to a new location near the strawberry patch, which happens to be near Hedgehog’s home. Hedgehog continues to offer casual advice, herbal remedies, and gentle overtures of friendship, though Boar refuses to outwardly acknowledge the kindnesses even as he takes it all to heart. When it’s Hedgehog who suddenly needs help, Boar finally steps up to do a good deed, and it’s the first step toward him being a boorish boar no more. The sweet story has a cheeky sense of humor to keep it from getting too sentimental, and it’s a hoot to watch Boar reevaluate his relationship with Hedgehog. Vibrant mixed-media illustrations feature wonderful texture and detail, and Boar’s wide range of expressions are a particular pleasure. A funny and warm examination of what it takes to make a friend. —*Emily Graham*

Bring Up the Sun.

By Derek Anderson. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 40p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $19.99 (9780062402608). PreS–Gr. 2.

When grandfather Sun retires from planetary duties and father Sun is too busy with other projects, little Sun steps up and steps into his light-giving destiny: “It was Sun’s turn to shine.” Energetic illustrations capture the impish celestial body with a wispy flame sprouting from the top of his orb-shaped head and legs as skinny as matchsticks, joyfully embarking on his new role. Sun tries his best but catches criticism from all corners of the world. The mountains complain he is too small, the clouds gripe about the new colors he makes them wear, and the city thinks he is too bright. Constant comparisons to how things used to be dim his light. In a pep talk, grandfather Sun dispenses simply stated truisms: “There are some in this world who will never be happy.” “Just be you.” Renewed, Sun shines on. This warm picture book will spark conversations about believing in one’s own light. —*Linda Ludke*

The Day the Books Disappeared.

By Joanna Ho and Caroline Kusin Pritchard. Illus. by Dan Santat.

July 2025. 40p. Disney/Hyperion, $18.99 (9781368110655). PreS–Gr. 2.

“Arnold hadn’t meant for it to happen. Not exactly.” He was just sitting on a beanbag in Room 6, “reading a book, which was his all-time favorite thing to do.” Arnold’s very favorite book is about planes, and he just knows if his classmates learned more, they’d love planes as much as he does. But Laila’s busy reading about tomatoes (“Yuck.”), and Naomi’s book about submarines? “Arnold was altogether offended by the idea.” When Arnold discovers he can wish away books on other topics, he’s too gleeful to notice his friends’ dismay until his own book vanishes, too—“POOF!” Laila gently starts a lesson in empathy for Arnold, and “each time he learned about a friend’s book, ZING!” it reappears, phew! Dynamic ink-and-digital illustrations highlight Caldecott Medalist Santat’s expressive portraiture, and Ho’s quick and plotty text skillfully employs humor to deliver its educational yet undidactic message. Given increasing limits on book access, this pick could be the honey that enlightens a few flies. —*Kit Ballenger*

Enchanted Beach.

By Esther Freud. Illus. by Emma Chinnery.

June 2025. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536243628). PreS–Gr. 2.

British novelist Freud’s first children’s book follows the year-round adventures of a family living beside the sea. Told through the point of view of the youngest child the story relays favorite activities in rhyming verse: “When it’s warm, I jump the waves. / Low or high, I leap. I’m brave!” Swimming, fishing for crabs, and building sand castles are other sunny pastimes at the shore. Autumnal winds afford blustery conditions perfect for flying a kite. On frosty winter days, “the sea is smooth, the fish, they dive. / I skip pebbles, two, three . . . five!” While the meanings of a few Briticisms like *row* and *tea* (meaning dinner) may be elusive to young readers, the word choices add specific character to the first-person narration. Chinnery’s captivating mixed-media illustrations depict the changing seasons and the evolving landscape of the beach. The close-knit family’s resolutions (“Help the planet.” “Save the bees”) and hopeful wish for the future (“Keep our beach enchanted. / Always here”) convey subtle messages of environmental stewardship. A lyrical picture book in tune with nature. —*Linda Ludke*

Freya and the Snake.

By Fredrik Sonck. Illus. by Jenny Lucander.

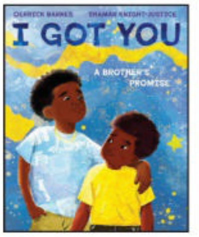
June 2025. 32p. Kids Can, $21.99 (9781525313721). K–Gr. 2.

When unwanted creatures come into the house, it can be difficult to get them out in a humane manner. Such is the drama for Freya’s family. After her baby brother, Hugo, spots a snake near their waterside home, Mom asks Dad to get rid of the snake. Dad tries valiantly to capture the snake in order to rehome it. After several hours of unsuccessful trapping attempts, however, he kills the snake, and Freya is devastated. Her older sister explains how dangerous a snake bite could be, her mother supervises a funeral for Snakey, and Freya’s father gets them ice cream, but Freya remains inconsolable. Digital collage illustrations combine line drawings with vibrant watercolors to emphasize the lush setting and to give a sunny feel to the story, despite Freya’s strong emotions. Her dad’s love and patience are evident as he respectfully acknowledges her feelings and discusses his actions. While still not happy, Freya eventually understands that Dad killed the snake to protect their family. Thoughtful and unusual, this story, translated from Swedish, will provoke family discussion. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

I Got You.

By Derrick Barnes. Illus. by Shamar Knight-Justice.

July 2025. 32p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, $18.99 (9780593111451). PreS–Gr. 3.



After baby Rasheed’s family brings him home from the hospital, he sees his big brother, Anthony, for the first time. As Daddy positions him on Anthony’s shoulder for burping, the older boy says, “There, there, baby bro, I got you.” When Rasheed reaches toddlerhood, Anthony makes time to show him how to build towers of blocks, knock them down, and rebuild them. He promises to be there when thunder rattles their home, and he keeps his promise. Rasheed learns to “fly” off a swing, dress himself for church, and ride a bike, all with help from his big brother. Occasionally, Rasheed can even join “the big dogs,” Anthony and his friends, for a bike ride. One day, the brothers learn that a new baby will be joining the family. Soon after he arrives, Rasheed holds him close, saying “You’re my little brother.” “I got you. Always will.” Dedicated to “all the big bros who laugh and protect and guide younger siblings,” this moving picture book depicts a loving Black family with a strong bond between siblings. Barnes’ simple, beautiful narrative is illuminated by Knight-Justice’s expressive, digital illustrations. An enjoyable picture book for reading aloud in families with children who wonder about becoming an older sibling. —*Carolyn Phelan*

I Like Hoops.

By Juwanda G. Ford. Illus. by Jada Jeni Bennett.

June 2025. 32p. Holiday, $15.99 (9780823459582). K–Gr. 2.

It’s hard to resist getting drawn into the final seconds of a close game, and this book brings readers right into that feeling. With five minutes left to play and a tied score, our unnamed narrator, a girl with brown skin and dark hair, reaches for a jump ball. When she misses, the other team pulls ahead! Several plays don’t go quite as planned, but in the end, our tenacious narrator makes a key steal that leads to a teammate’s winning basket. Though the simple, digitally created illustrations feel a bit flat-footed, the back-and-forth of the game is unusually exciting for such a highly decodable text. Readers and their adults may also appreciate the good sportsmanship modeled throughout by the teammates (“Nice try”), coaches (“Almost”), and fans (“Go go go”). Our narrator experiences several setbacks (“I miss” and “I slip”), but that does not stop her from concluding that “I like hoops.” A narrative for very early readers that doesn’t sacrifice story in the name of decodability? That’s a definite win! —*Elisha Brookover*

Island Storm.

By Brian Floca. Illus. by Sydney Smith.

June 2025. 48p. Holiday/Neal Porter, $18.99 (9780823456475). PreS–Gr. 3.

ISLAND STORM
BRIAN FLOCA
SYDNEY SMITH

A boy and his little sister venture out into their island town to “see / the sea before the storm”—but before the text even begins, illustrator Smith, wizard that he is, has already conjured the story’s stirring emotions through an interior title page heavy with a longing sense of nostalgia and a dedication page filled by darkening gray-blue skies, tilted trees, a fluttering laundry line, and a woman chasing down some garments blown free. As the storm approaches, the siblings watch growing waves crash into the shore; they pass boarded-up homes and various landmarks of their eerily empty town. Between each section of the homey island tour, they pause to consider retreat—but press forward with the refrain “You pull on me, I pull on you, and we decide to go on.” When thunder booms, though, they run. The blotted watercolor and gouache art takes on a diagonal blur as rain torrents muddle every spread, until they finally reach the safety of home and their mother’s arms. Floca’s poetic text carries all the quiet suspense and crashing weight of an approaching gale, colored by enough loving detail of setting that it finds something powerfully universal in the specific. An oddly moving ode to childhood, home, and sibling bonds, set to the awesome bass line of nature. —*Ronny Khuri*

The Kite Collector.

By Zoey Abbott. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 32p. Kids Can, $21.99 (9781525312526). PreS–Gr. 2.

James works hard to purchase beautiful kites that he then stores in his closet. After walking neighbors’ dogs, watering their plants, and sweeping their porches, he’s able to buy a checkered kite, a smiling purple octopus kite with ribbon arms, and a pirate flag kite for his hidden collection, where everything is “beautiful, tidy, safe, just right.” Enter his baby sister, just learning to walk—and destroy things. She damages one of the octopus’ arms. The turn in James’ development comes after he screams at his sister and she collapses in tears, making him feel regretful. When his sister is older and wants to fly the skull-and-crossbones kite, James is horrified, thinking the kite could get damaged or destroyed, but he decides to fly the kite with her anyway. They have a terrific time—and a slightly torn kite. The illustrations use multimedia materials, humorously conveying both order and chaos. A wonderful resolution, with James thinking that everything is fine (“pretty safe, a bit unruly, and somehow just right”), showcases his new openness to new experiences. —*Connie Fletcher*

Leif’s Gift.

By Michael Wang. Illus. by Lenny Wen.

June 2025. 40p. Norton/Young Readers, $18.99 (9781324052784). PreS–Gr. 2.

Leif really, really, loves plants. He loves them to the point that his apartment bedroom over his parents’ café is completely filled with begonias, button ferns, pothos, hoyas, and more. Varying shades of green depict Leif’s urban foliage, making his room seem like a wild but inviting jungle. Leif’s parents are patient with his passion, but when he loses his watering can, library book, and even his pet turtle among the greenery, they know that something must be done. Along with factual gardening information and tips, the narrative includes depictions of a caring family environment, perseverance with plant care, and problem-solving techniques. Leif enlists his parents to help him propagate. After carefully cutting stems from each plant, he places them

Continued on p.93

Focus on First Day of School

Art by Juanita Londoño, from *First Day around the World*, by Ibi Zoboi.

First Day around the World.

By Ibi Zoboi. Illus. by Juanita Londoño.

June 2025. 48p. HarperCollins/Versify, $19.99 (9780063078888). PreS–Gr. 3. 372.1.

What does the first day of school look like? This exuberant picture book shows that it really depends on your location in the world. Starting in Africa with a small house in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where a girl breakfasts on fit-fit and warm coffee with a pinch of salt, lyrical text from Coretta Scott King Book Award winner Zoboi describes typical preparations, clothing, food, transportation, traditions, and learning continent by continent. As Zoboi transitions to a new continent, she signifies a new part of the day, such as classroom instruction in China, lunch in Poland, an after-school snack in Argentina, and bedtime lullabies in Alaska. Although the focus is on positive activities, the text also acknowledges that for some children "school" is another day of work to earn food and shelter, and that some children "learn of division and borders." Some readers may need help understanding such details as cities without country references and specific cultural traditions. Londoño's colorful, energetic, and inclusive illustrations offer context clues and celebrate a wide range of childhood perspectives. —*Angela Leeper*

Fish Don't Go to School.

By Deb Pilutti. Illus. by the author.

July 2025. 40p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano, $18.99 (9780316565271). PreS–K.

When Henry wears his bright-orange fish suit, he feels special. It has scales that sparkle and shimmer. There's a long tail that swishes when he walks and a secret pocket. Just a little tight, the fish suit feels "like wearing a hug." Henry wears it everywhere, every day, so when his mother gives him new, non-sparkly clothes to wear on his first day of school, Henry balks. In his classroom, the children watch him warily, but he soon befriends Lucy, who wears cat ears, and Ethan, who builds a tower of blocks with him. Back home, Henry tells his goldfish about his day and looks forward to taking her to school on Pet Day. The third-person narrative excels at representing the child's viewpoint fairly without attempting to explain it. After all, when facing a daunting new experience, who wouldn't want the clothing that gives him courage, accompanied by a constant, supportive hug? Pilutti's bright, lively illustrations were created with gouache, wax pastels, and "a bit of digital painting." A playful picture book focusing on the first-day-of-school theme. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Kitty vs. Kindergarten.

By Martha Freeman. Illus. by Eda Kaban.

June 2025. 48p. Disney/Hyperion, $17.99 (9781368097284). PreS–Gr. 2.

This comical kindergarten-readiness tale mirrors the confusion and resistance a child might have to kindergarten by plunking a house cat smack dab in the middle of this totally strange environment. Kitty is perfectly content with the routine of meal and nap times at home, but one day, his "good, nice boy" announces that he's taking Kitty to kindergarten, and he's summarily packed into a cat carrier for show-and-tell. The action moves from Kitty hiding in his carrier to venturing out a little, seeing what the kids are doing, and wandering among them. The climax comes when the class leaves for lunch. The class gerbil escapes his cage, and Kitty rampages after it, overturning everything in his way. The pastel illustrations with heavy black outlines adeptly capture both the cozy classroom atmosphere and the chaos of the chase. The teacher forgives Kitty, show-and-tell goes well, and Kitty goes back to his routine. A fun way to introduce young readers to kindergarten, enlivened by the gerbil chase. —*Connie Fletcher*

Scarecited on the First Day of School.

By Alliah L. Agostini. Illus. by Lala Watkins.

June 2025. 40p. Farrar, $18.99 (9780374390020). PreS–Gr. 2.

Playing on the idea that people can feel two things at the same time, the author invents a series of portmanteaus: Afua is scared and excited, therefore "scarecited," as she anticipates the new experience of starting school. She is pleased with her "flute" outfit because it's fly and cute. She's "shurious," shy and curious, as she meets her classmates and "sadbarrassed" when the teacher pronounces her name incorrectly. Using bold, flat, saturated colors, digital brushes are employed in a sophisticated, childlike style well-suited to the story. Hand-lettered display type draws attention to Afua's heightened emotions as she embarks on her first day. The class includes children using adaptive devices, a girl wearing a head-covering, and people with a variety of skin colors and hair types. The combined-words device keeps the tone upbeat and entertaining, even as the book shares important messages about sharing feelings, making friends, and standing up for yourself when needed. Beginning-of-school and the-importance-of-names books are always in great demand, and this title is a welcome addition to the collection. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

The Tour at School.

By Katie Clapham. Illus. by Nadia Shireen.

July 2025. 40p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536242980). PreS–Gr. 2.

In Clapham's sweet picture book, the spirited young narrator gives instructions for showing a "New Person" around the school, her own wide-eyed New Person firmly in tow. There is useful advice for being welcoming and enthusiastic, as well as for showing everything important (the bathroom, the playground). Still, the narrator's voice feels authentically and amusingly childlike as she points out things like the strawberry-scented hand soap and various lost gloves. Along the way, her New Person gets a bit lost and has to meet the narrator at their designated "Emergency Meet-Up Place," where the narrator reveals that last year she was a lost New Person herself. In the end, she expresses the hope that she and the latest New Person can become real friends and that the new student will eventually be giving tours too. Shireen's jaunty and often funny illustrations, which have a slight *South Park* vibe, perfectly capture the narrator's energy and the new student's hesitancy, as well as the school setting. An endearing, humorous study in empathy and welcoming newcomers. —*Miriam Aronin*

Continued from p.91

in pots or bottles to grow new roots. Gifting them to his family members and friends is a great way to share, but with so many plants, he decides each café customer should get one too! His last plant baby is saved for the café itself. Unique text and humorous, warm illustrations present a fun take on a boy's special hobby. —*Lucinda Whitehurst*

Marianne the Maker.

By Kelly Corrigan and Claire Corrigan Lichty. Illus. by George Sweetland.

June 2025. 32p. Flamingo, $18.99 (9780593206096). PreS–Gr. 2.

Marianne's father loves soccer, and he's so certain his daughter will love it too that he signs her up for a team. Though she attempts to play, the freckled, bespectacled child can't get into it; it's just not her thing. What Marianne loves to do is create. After fibbing to her father by telling him she's too ill to play soccer, the girl makes a blueprint of an imagined invention. She then gathers myriad items she deems necessary for her creation: tin cans, a helmet, string, a bowl, and some snacks. "It improved her day and mood, to boot. Oh, wait! That's it! A MOODLEBOOT!" Marianne's dad, of course, discovers that his child has not been truthful but accepts her heartfelt apology, especially since he's impressed with the moodleboot she made. The colorful, cheerful artwork is filled with details that will engage children, while rhyming couplets convey the tale of a youngster and her parent who learn to communicate better and work side by side in developing the girl's natural talents. —*Maryann Owen*

More or Less.

By Alison Hughes. Illus. by Oge Mora.

June 2025. 40p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316592604). PreS–Gr. 1.

What does it mean to have *plenty*? Is it possible that less is more? Mora's signature cut-paper illustrations lead readers through a thoughtful exploration of these big ideas. Though there are no more than three words on any page—always a variation on *more*, *less*, or *plenty*—exploring the illustrations unlocks a rich storyline. A family has "plenty" in their cozy home, but as the boy's room fills up with "more. And more. Even more," he becomes agitated and decides to give away his things. Over time, the family, and eventually the community, works together to reuse and recycle things they no longer need. The text never states what exactly there is more or less *of*, so readers are free to interpret how having less might result in more—could it be community? Connection? Nature? Joy? Ultimately, the family concludes that its loving group hug is "plenty." This deceptively simple text demonstrates ways to be a good steward of the Earth and our communities, while guiding even the youngest readers to reflect on what is truly valuable. —*Elisha Brookover*

Mouse and Spoon: The Elephant's Birthday.

By Cynthia Rylant. Illus. by Janna Mattia.

June 2025. 32p. Simon & Schuster/Simon Spotlight, $18.99 (9781665962162). PreS–Gr. 2.

The Mouse and Spoon series, written for beginning readers, introduces three little mice: Ginger, the eldest; Tom, the youngest; and Piper, the middle mouse. Together, they run a bakery and sleep above the shop. One day, an elephant enters the bakery and asks if they can create a birthday cake for him. Tom nearly blurts out a negative reply, but Ginger places her paw over his mouth and agrees to make the cake. The mice work day and night, baking 134 tiny cakes and delivering the order on time. The elephant cries tears of joy and invites the bakers to enjoy the party. After dancing and nibbling on cake, the weary mice return home for a good night's sleep. Rylant's gift for writing beginning-reader books is evident in this pleasing, sometimes amusing tale. Mattia's imaginative line drawings and delicate color washes help bring the endearing characters to life. A heartening book for beginning readers and an enjoyable choice for reading aloud to preschoolers. *Owlets and Tarts*, the second volume in the series, will also be published in June. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Music of the Mountains: A Story in Pakistan.

By Sabrina Shah. Illus. by Manal Mirza.

2025. 32p. Barefoot, $17.99 (9798888593660). K–Gr. 2.

Sunset brings the joy of listening to Neeka Baba's beautiful music as he deftly plays the rabab, a traditional lute-like instrument with 35 strings. Roohi is nervous about playing the instrument at her school's Eid celebration concert, so her grandfather advises her to feel the music rooted in the mountains and stories of their northern Pakistan homeland. Despite diligent practice, her confidence falters when Neeka Baba falls ill. At the concert, Roohi freezes. As Mama begins clapping from the audience, with Neeka Baba by her side, Roohi remembers she can play like herself; now confident, Roohi's music conjures up the rich tapestry of her homeland and its traditions. Poetic refrains thread through the text, echoing the folk tales in the music and repeating rhythmic phrases like "twist, tweak, turn." Rich colors, undulating shapes, and patterned strokes evoke Pakistani folk tradition in music and story. The authentic, beguiling celebration of Pakistani culture and tradition concludes with details about this intriguing instrument, with photos of musicians and a QR link to music samples, along with an overview of Pakistan's geography, holidays, and language. —*Rebecca Thornburgh*

The Riding Lesson.

By Jennifer K. Mann. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 56p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536235265). PreS–Gr. 2.

Horse-infatuated Frances is offered a "very first riding lesson" when invited to her friend Mae's house, but she quickly learns that the equestrian experience isn't quite what she had envisioned. The barn smells, the clothing and gear prove daunting, and Snowball isn't the stately beast Frances had imagined. When the encounter turns intimidating, Frances willingly faces her fears and proves endearingly open to the challenges of the new experiences. Similarly formatted and paced to the author-illustrator's overnight-adventure story, *The Camping Trip* (2020), the gently humorous and emotionally tactful plot packs in helpful horse-care information that's visually supported by cartoonish mixed-media illustrations: for example, "'Was your mom picking up poop with that big fork?' 'Yup! It's called a pitchfork. That's how you clean the horses' stalls.'" Not everyone who loves horses has the opportunity/pleasure/responsibility/terror of actually riding one. This instructive guide harnesses the same spirit as Amy Novesky's *If You Want to Ride a Horse* (2024), and it will better equip eager hippophiles anticipating their own riding lessons. —*Kit Ballenger*

Sarang Saves the School.

By Korena Di Roma Howley. Illus. by Joowon Oh.

July 2025. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536232318). PreS–Gr. 3.

So many families have left Sarang's coastal village in Korea that low enrollment may force the local school to close. Sarang loves her seaside classroom, where the teacher has plenty of time for her three students. Meanwhile, Sarang's grandmother shares her memories of working in vegetable gardens as a child. Because only boys attended school in those days, she never learned to read or write. Sarang has a bright idea, which she shares with her parents and friends: if the village grandmothers enroll and attend classes, there will be enough students to justify keeping the school open. Encouraged by the principal, the grandmothers become students, saving the school and keeping their families near. Based on a newspaper article about grandmothers enrolling in a Korean elementary school, the story will strike a chord with many primary-grade children. Appealing digital pictures illustrate the well-paced narrative, which is strengthened by Sarang's determination to save her school and her empathy for her grandmother, who regrets that she cannot write her own letters to relatives. A moving picture book. —*Carolyn Phelan*

Un-Wanted.

By Kashelle Gourley. Illus. by Skylar Hogan.

June 2025. 40p. little bee, $18.99 (9781499817379). K–Gr. 2.

The creative team behind *I'm Not Missing* (2022) will delight readers with this feline-infused sequel. Bumble the dog dons a Sherlock Holmes–style cape and hat while he puts up wanted posters of a black cat. Bumble has been investigating some strange occurrences: mysterious hairballs, scratches on furniture, and an uneasy feeling of being watched. A humorously illustrated evidence board highlights Bumble's detective work. Upon finally confronting the culprit, a black cat, Bumble's owner states the obvious: the cat is Bumble's new sister! Realizing he missed obvious clues about the cat, like kitty litter and cat food, Bumble doubts his watchdog/detective skills. While initially irritated about the new addition to the household, Bumble comes around to appreciate a cat sibling—especially if she can get him treats and massages his back. Deciding to leave his investigative work behind him, Bumble opts to embrace a more relaxed lifestyle with his human and kitty companion. The hilarious facial expressions and high jinks will prove irresistible to readers who love stories about funny animals. —*Ana Menchaca*

We Are American, Too.

By Kristen Mei Chase. Illus. by Jieting Chen.

June 2025. 40p. Farrar, $18.99 (9780374390211). PreS–Gr. 2.

Mei, a Chinese American girl, is getting ready alongside her family to make their annual trip to Friendship Archway, where they will honor her great-great-grandfather Samuel Gong Moy. He holds the distinction of being "the second American-born Chinese person in Washington, DC." Friendship Archway, a symbol of friendship between Washington, DC, and Beijing, is like their family—"from China but also American." During their walk, Mei and her family remember old stories about Mei's great-great-grandfather and enjoy delicious char siu bao. As they make their way into Chinatown, Mei and her family come upon a rally against anti-Asian hate. After Mei unexpectedly takes the stage, she tells the crowd about her great-great-grandfather and proudly leads the crowd into a chant of "We are American, too!" Richly textured digital illustrations resemble watercolor paintings and employ sepia tones to visually distinguish flashbacks. Based on the author's real-life ancestors, this beautifully illustrated story is a rousing celebration of Chinese American identity and a call for unity. —*Van McGary*

What If We. . . .

By Vivienne Chang. Illus. by Eugenia Yoh.

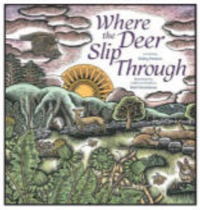
June 2025. 40p. Little, Brown, $18.99 (9780316377201). PreS–Gr. 2.

Max has already run out of things to do on the second day of summer. As he thinks of ideas to counter boredom, like going to the park, the pool, and the zoo, his little sister, Mimi, repeatedly asks to join in. Even as they explore these different places, Max has trouble enjoying their current activity. He can't help but think that "there might be something better out there." His imagination runs through fantastical ideas like jumping on giant Jell-O, flying in a hot-air balloon, and other "what if" scenarios. Mimi interrupts her brother and reminds him they could just be together. On the last day of summer, Max and Mimi have so much to do, they don't even need to leave their house. Mixed-media illustrations capture the wonder and fantasy of Max's imagination. Expressive facial features convey a wide range of emotions, including Mimi's longing for her brother's attention. Muted tones create a vintage feel, as if channeling childhood memories. A sweet story about sibling bonding and enjoying the present. —*Van McGary*

Where the Deer Slip Through.

By Katey Howes. Illus. by Beth Krommes.

June 2025. 32p. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane, $19.99 (9781665918275). PreS–Gr. 2.



A series of woodland creatures breaches the fold of a farmyard at the forest's edge, their comings and goings over the course of a bucolic day detailed in rhyme and intricate art. "This is the hedge that grew and grew. / The wall of stone a bit askew. / They guard the yard. / The barn does, too. / While just outside, hills roll and rise / away off into the pines." Through gaps in stone and branches deer dash at dawn, lizards creep at midday, and bats swoop "as the full moon makes her bright debut." The soothing cadence of an impeccably crafted rhyme scheme plays on the cumulative "House That Jack Built" structure with a refrain, "away off into the pines," firmly anchoring the sylvan story. Lilting text includes pleasing repetition and sits in clean white spaces nestled amid Caldecott Medalist Krommes' signature, exceptionally detailed scratchboard-and-watercolor illustrations. Krommes breathes life into the woodland setting and wildlife she so meticulously portrays, with each double-page spread advancing the course of the day. Howes passed away suddenly in 2024, leaving this triumph among her legacy of uplifting STEM-centered works for children. Savor this standout during quieter reading moments and prepare to share it widely during nature-themed programming. —*Kit Ballenger*

Wild Everywhere.

By Katya Balen. Illus. by Gill Smith.

July 2025. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536243000). PreS–Gr. 2.

A transplanted child learns that nature lives deep within, wherever she travels, in a lyrical reminder to appreciate small moments in any environment. "In the woods I find wildness all around me." Mushrooms, stars, and a clutch of bunnies delight a girl given freedom to roam. "But one day we leave the wildness behind," she shares, and the steely city skyscrapers feel inhospitable to someone so accustomed to the forest. A bird beckons the overwhelmed child through busy streets to an urban park that helps her understand "there is wildness everywhere." First-person text in emphatic dual fonts includes poetic descriptors ("silver fish suppers," "ink-dark beetles"), while soft-edged mixed-media artwork shifts its perspective to emphasize the child's feeling of smallness in the city and the oversized presence that wild creatures and nature play in her life. The girl's orange-jacketed explorations are deeply reminiscent of Beatrice Alemagna's *On a Magical Do-Nothing Day* (2017), though this is a quieter pick for kids who carry the wildness within. —*Kit Ballenger*

Willow and the Wildflowers.

By Matthew Schufman. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 40p. Random House Studio, $18.99 (9780593648308). PreS–Gr. 2.

Willow, a fretful bear, rarely leaves her tree-stump home. Afraid of everything, she routinely declines invitations to events, but her deep love for flowers motivates her to venture outside her comfort zone and attend the Seaside Wildflower Festival. Hopping on a raft and setting off "into the great unknown," Willow doesn't get very far before drowning in worry and second thoughts. A friendly frog offers assistance and encourages the trepidatious bear to dip her toes in new experiences and face her fears. More friends join Willow on her journey, calmly guiding her through the forest and through her distress. When Willow frets about being scared of the dark, a raccoon changes the conversation to consider a stunning view of the Northern Lights and shooting stars. Schufman's textured digital illustrations capture a whimsical world of wide-eyed animals and idyllic cottagecore landscapes. As Willow learns to reframe her worrisome thoughts, this picture book delivers a heartening message about dealing with anxiety and being present: "The world was beautiful, and Willow was in it." —*Linda Ludke*

The Wombats Go Wild for Words.

By Beth Ferry. Illus. by Lori Nichols.

June 2025. 40p. Random House Studio, $18.99 (9780593711057). PreS–Gr. 2.

Here's a "splendiferous" tale of how three word-loving wombats create enthusiasm and optimism in a rather bland forest of "weary" creatures. The trio of wombats is passing though the nice Evergreen Forest, where animals hardly speak to one another and where, when they do, it's with dull, boring, and overused words. A curious duckling joins the three and is "gobsmacked" at all the new words that can be used when communicating with others: *sweltering* rather than *hot*, *parched* in place of *thirsty*, and *exhausted* instead of *tired*. The wombats, with the assistance of their sidekick, help some porcupines, some turtles, and the duckling's family learn new ways of expressing themselves, bringing new energy to the forest. Words are introduced that are fun to pronounce, including *skedaddle*, *chortle*, *squabble*, and *hullabaloo*. Nichols' charming, colorful illustrations were created using pen and ink, acrylics, and watercolors. "Little Duckling's Ducktionary" appears at the conclusion of the "exuberant" tale filled with a "plethora" of new vocabulary words that readers will take delight in adopting. —*Maryann Owen*

Spotlight on **SF/Fantasy & Horror**

Art from *That Devil, Ambition,* by Linsey Miller.

Older Readers

Avatar Legends: City of Echoes.

By Judy I. Lin.

July 2025. 320p. Abrams/Amulet, $21.99 (9781419776045). Gr. 7–12.

Citizens in Ba Sing Se know not to acknowledge the war beyond the walls. Jin is intimately familiar with the war: having lost her parents, she's sought refuge with her grandfather, Gong-gong. Now they're established in the Lower Ring, though Gong-gong pushes Jin to strive for a better life. Jin is fairly content where she is—she spends her time assisting at her best friend, Susu Wen's, family bakery and tending to Gong-gong's ailments. But Susu's alcoholic father makes a bet he can't settle, and Susu is sent to the Upper Ring to work off the debt. Determined to bring her friend back, Jin takes up suspicious deliveries for the Silver Fangs, only to discover Susu in the Upper Ring with no memory of Jin or the Wens. Jin must decide if descending further into the gang and the conspiracies of the city are worth it for Susu. Based on a side character in the Avatar: The Last Airbender series, this opener of one-off stories by best-selling Lim will excite fans new and old with the secrets it reveals. —*Kelly Ferreira*

Bad Creek.

By Peyton June.

June 2025. 384p. Norton, $18.99 (9781324082934). Gr. 8–12.

This summer, Iris is returning to Bad Creek for a vacation that has long been a family tradition. This trip is different, however; Iris' older sister, Glory, drowned at Bad Creek the previous summer, and Iris is convinced that Glory's death was no accident. Her two best friends are also back at Bad Creek: Gum, whose family members on his mother's side are powerful and in control, and Aidan, who is afraid that he was somehow involved in Glory's death but can't remember. Gum is plagued with visions of Glory's rotting corpse. He doesn't understand why the others aren't also haunted until he learns about a terrible tradition that ensures his family's continued success and power. The trio's sleuthing thus reveals Bad Creek's history and uncovers the truth of this tradition. Each friend's point of view is explored, but Iris, determined and stubborn, is the driving force behind the investigation. The plot evolves slowly but smoothly, transitioning from mystery to horror before the reader notices, while while touching on power, religion, and sexuality. This is a stunning, eerie debut. —*Donna Scanlon*

Beast.

By Richard Van Camp.

June 2025. 320p. Douglas & McIntyre, paper, $14.95 (9781771624145). Gr. 8–12.

From a Tłıcho Dene author comes an eerie thriller placing readers in the Northwest Territories, 1986. Lawson Sauron's whole life has revolved around a treaty governing the peace between the Dogrib and Chipewyan tribes of Fort Simmer, Lawson honoring the Yabati motto of "Protect, accept, respect, and defend with honour." When his best friend, Cody Cranes, goes missing, Lawson believes he may be the only one who can help find Cody. Late one evening, Lawson witnesses some sort of malevolent spirit possessing Cody's brothers, and his fears are confirmed: a powerful, evil entity is being used to break the treaty. Elements of medicine, magic, and dark forces are interwoven throughout the work, as are tribal stories focused on community, identity, and responsibility. Lawson's struggle is familiar to many teens, with his piling responsibilities and outsider status as he tries to find his friend. The cast of characters offers a unique glimpse into some of the more intimate practices of various Indigenous cultures, and fun pop culture nods firmly cement this supernatural work in its 1980s setting. A rewarding read. —*Sam Ponke*

Bitten.

By Jordan Stephanie Gray.

July 2025. 384p. Little, Brown, $19.99 (9780316588430). Gr. 9–12.

Gray's fun, fast-paced werewolf fantasy is dark, enchanting, and packed with action, romance, and betrayal. Vanessa Hart, a rule-following good girl, tends to shy away from stereotypical high-school adventures, but her wild best friend, Celeste, encourages her to break some rules for a change and sneak out to a party on the wealthy side of town. But what starts as a harmless rebellion quickly turns into horror when a vicious werewolf attacks, killing Celeste and biting Vanessa. The next thing she knows, she's being carted off to a hidden castle in the court of the ruthless Wolf Queen, where she has to not only survive her devastating loss but deal with her new transformation and hunger for revenge. Gray's world building and sharp banter really shine once Vanessa arrives in the Wolf Queen's court, and tension builds when she finds herself in a love triangle with two compelling men. Her growth from a quiet girl to a fierce, justice-seeking werewolf is satisfying to watch. Readers looking for a twisty, supernatural romance with new-adult vibes will be hooked. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Bones at the Crossroads.

By LaDarrion Williams.

July 2025. 544p. Random/Labyrinth Road, $20.99 (9780593711965). Gr. 9–12.

In this strong sequel, Malik finds his freshman year at Caiman University, the magical HBCU, as packed with drama, revelations, enemies, and new magics as his ordeal in *Blood at the Root* (2024). Though still processing the summer's devastating truths and losses, Malik is hoping for a fresh start. Nevertheless, he can't forget the Bokor threat, particularly as he now secretly possesses the coveted Scroll of Idan, which his mother has already killed for. In this turbulent semester, Malik meets another legendary family member, eases into a slow romance with Dominique, runs for homecoming court against two best friends, and joins the secret society Divine Elam. When the Bokors attack, it leads to a cinematic showdown where Malik faces a life-altering choice. Williams emphasizes heartfelt messages about the importance of Black men's mental health and fostering a queer-inclusive community, though sometimes his characters slip into a too-adult voice when discussing them. Along with the fascinating lore Williams continues to develop, Malik's growth as a character is rewarding. A cliff-hanger ending ensures that readers will return to Caiman University in a heartbeat. —*Krista Hutley*

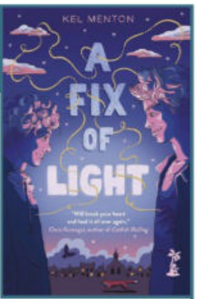
Celestial Banquet.

By Roselle Lim.

June 2025. 320p. Zando/Sweet July, $19.99 (9781638931263). Gr. 7–12.

Winning the Celestial Banquet would have many benefits for talented young noodle chef Cai; in addition to relieving her of the burden of needing multiple jobs just to survive, it could also solidify the independence and continued sovereignty of her peninsular home, always under threat of annexation by the larger Continent. Convincing her local minor god, Kama, to sponsor a three-person team is the first step; then she and her two teammates must travel far to the competition in Xianling. Meanwhile, those teammates—Bo, a poor local childhood friend; and Seon, a wealthy new acquaintance—are competing for her affection. To win a peach of immortality and all the accompanying boons, Cai must work with little experience to survive various trials, as well as untrustworthy and shifting alliances. Intricate world building creates a well-defined framework, and a complex competition with creative challenges keeps the plot moving steadily despite the expansive cast. Southeast Asian and Chinese influences abound, and though the food scenes are not as numerous as they could be, they are mouth-watering, nonetheless. —*Allie Stevens*

Top 10 SF/Fantasy Books for Youth



This year's top 10 sf and fantasy titles for youth, reviewed in *Booklist* from August 2024 through June 2025, see the continued dominance of fantasy within speculative fiction, along with a resurgence in portal fantasies and an ongoing movement toward diversity in world building.—*Ronny Khuri*

A Fix of Light. By Kel Menton. 2025. 288p. Little Island (9781915071644). Gr. 9–12.

Menton draws on Irish mythology to tell a fantastical love story between Hanan, who's unsure if he's experiencing magic or psychosis, and Pax, an enigmatic newcomer in town.

Graciela in the Abyss. By Meg Medina. Illus. by Anna Balbusso and Elena Balbusso. 2025. 256p. Candlewick (9781536219456). Gr. 5–9.

Graciela, a 12-year-old turned sea spirit, and Jorge, a blacksmith's son, find their fates entwined when a cursed harpoon threatens both their worlds.

I Am the Swarm. By Hayley Chewins. 2025. 336p. Viking (9780593623862). Gr. 9–12.

Nell grapples with her magic—swarms of insects that accompany her strongest feelings—and her trauma in this tale highlighting the importance of anger as self-protection.

Impossible Creatures. By Katherine Rundell. Illus. by Ashley Mackenzie. 2024. 368p. Knopf (9780593809860). Gr. 3–7.

In this classic-feeling portal-fantasy adventure, Christopher joins Mal in the magical Archipelago to help save the last griffin and stop the world's magic from dying out.

Lola. By Karla Arenas Valenti. Illus. by Islenia Mil. 2024. 256p. Knopf (9780593177006). Gr. 4–7.

Mexican folklore inspires this tale as Lola enters the magical realm of Floresta to investigate the decline of her family's magical tree as well as her brother's health.

Our Infinite Fates. By Laura Steven. 2025. 352p. St. Martin's/Wednesday (9781250333889). Gr. 9–12.

Evelyn and Arden race to kill each other before their shared eighteenth birthday in every lifetime. But this time, Evelyn is determined to survive for someone else's fate.

(S)Kin. By Ibi Zoboi. 2025. 400p. HarperCollins/Versify (9780062888877). Gr. 9–12.

Marisol and her mother begin working for Genevieve's family, and Marisol and Genevieve find themselves grappling with uncanny similarities and a deep, powerful magic.

The Undead Fox of Deadwood Forest. By Aubrey Hartman. Illus. by Marcin Minor. 2025. 320p. Little, Brown (9780316575720). Gr. 4–7.

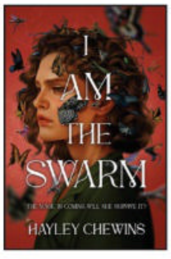
In this lightly macabre animal fantasy, Clare, an undead fox who ushers lost souls to the afterlife, is flummoxed when a badger's soul won't move on.

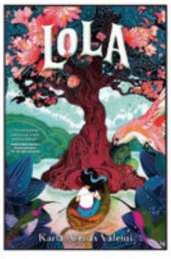
The Wild Huntress. By Emily Lloyd-Jones. 2024. 432p. Little, Brown (9780316568142). Gr. 8–12.

As three lives twine together to affect the outcome of the fabled Wild Hunt, believable characters with sparkly chemistry inhabit a palpably atmospheric world.

A World Worth Saving. By Kyle Lukoff. 2025. 352p. Dial (9780593618981). Gr. 5–8.

When Jewish trans boy A Izenson is saved by a golem, he finds Jewish folklore coming to life and must save his best friend and the world from sheyds preying on fear and hatred.





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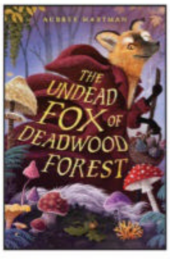
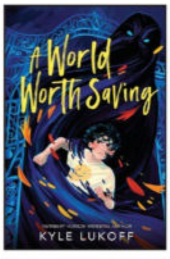
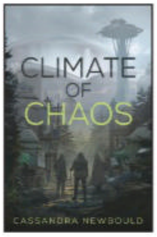




Climate of Chaos.

By Cassandra Newbould.

July 2025. 384p. Peachtree Teen, $19.99 (9781682637579). Gr. 9–12.



Catastrophic storms that are measured in minuscule numbers of survivors and a particularly virulent strain of a deadly illness sweeping into the Pacific Northwest are not Fox's main concerns. No, the reason she abandons her life as a Still Alive mercenary to become an Aegis Corporation citizen is her sister's kidnapping by that same company. In order to rescue Rabbit, Fox and her friends go undercover as candidates joining Aegis' military police, and they discover along the way that Aegis, a company that functions through medical extortion, is somehow up to something even more nefarious. As with many next-generation dystopian novels, the complex world building does rely slightly on genre conventions to shortcut extended exposition, but both the terminology and setting details are largely conveyed through commendably natural character dialogue. Despite adhering to the plot structure popularized by Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011), the details within that structure are rarely predictable and always engaging. This is in part due to Fox's physical disability, an almost unheard-of trait in dystopian protagonists. Fox's narration at first more often serves as an approachable introduction to chronic pain than casual representation, but as time goes on, she firmly establishes herself as the cane-wielding menace disabled readers deserve to see. This stellar series opener is a must-read for dystopian fans old and new. —*Austin Ferraro*

Coffeeshop in an Alternate Universe.

By C. B. Lee.

June 2025. 400p. Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (9781250778024). Gr. 8–12.

COFFEESHOP IN AN Alternate Universe
CB LEE

The last thing Brenda expects while trying to submit a scholarship application is to stumble into an alternate world of magic, one inhabited by Kat, a cute girl she asks out. When the day of their date arrives, however, neither Brenda nor Kat can find each other—because they're searching in different worlds. Portals are opening between their two universes, and the girls soon manage to reunite and learn about each other: while Brenda is firmly focused on her plan to save the world, Kat is dodging her future as the Chosen One. As they spend more time together, the two don't just fall in love; they also uncover the reason behind the accelerating disasters in each of their worlds and forge a new plan to save everyone, together. Told in alternating POV chapters, Lee's latest is a delight. Brenda and Kat complement each other, fitting into each other's lives like missing puzzle pieces; their friends and family are beautiful additions to their story. Lee's deftly created worlds make so much sense, it's enough to make one wonder if the magical universe isn't real too, just on the other side of Los Angeles. This sapphic romance manages to be sweet, tender, and high-stakes all at the same time—a true triple threat. *—Karis Rogerson*

Embrace the Serpent.

By Sunya Mara.

June 2025. 352p. Harper, $19.99 (9780063386136). Gr. 9–12.

"You can't be hurt if no one knows you exist." Saphira, once an Imperial Ward and now a largely unseen servant to jewelry maker Galen, follows those words carefully. She does all of his design work, twirling gemstones and metal into one-of-a-kind magical pieces, which Galen then sells to the richest of the rich. When her childhood nemesis, Mirandel, somehow recognizes her at a fine party, Saphira is scared for her life. If she's caught and returned to the Imperial Lady Incarnadine, she will surely be killed, as was the rest of her family many years before. She goes on the run with her tools and her tiny golem, Grimney, only to be caught by the mysterious and divine Serpent King, who tries to protect her, even when she might be finding feelings for the king's huntsman, Rane. As they head toward the Serpent Kingdom to escape Incarnadine, will they truly be safe? Mara's third YA fantasy involves complex feelings and an intriguing way of looking at magic. Recommended for all libraries. *—Stacey Comfort*

Empty Heaven.

By Freddie Kölsch.

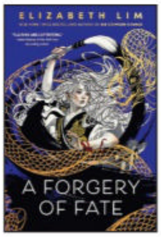
Aug. 2025. 424p. Union Square, $19.99 (9781454951629). Gr. 9–12.

Wealthy, awkward Darian always looks forward to summers with her three best friends in Kesuquosh, an idyllic Massachusetts village known for its sunflower fields and its eccentric worship of the scarecrow deity Good Arcturus, a well-known bit of charming "New England weirdness." After multiple summers crushing on her friend KJ, Darian decides to surprise her with a Halloween visit, hoping to go on a real date and also see the sacred Harvest Hallow celebration. Yet KJ is alarmed to see her, an off note that only grows as Darian is swept up in the ritualistic festival that suddenly seems intensely creepy and deadly serious. Kölsch adds unexpected twists to this queer folk horror story, cleverly subverting expectations with its monster and leading to an emotional climax in which Darian's traumatic past proves to be a source of hidden strength. Set in the early 2000s with plentiful period detail, the story balances both real-world and supernatural horrors with funny, tender, lighthearted moments among the close-knit friends. *—Krista Hutley*

★ A Forgery of Fate.

By Elizabeth Lim.

June 2025. 480p. Knopf, $20.99 (9780593650615). Gr. 7–12.



Readers who love the classic fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast" will be enchanted by Lim's imaginative take set in a world inspired by China. With her signature vivid writing and world building and multifaceted characters, Lim gives readers an immersive experience. Tru is a gifted art forger and reluctant con artist—and keeps secret that she can paint the future. She's spent most of her life supporting her debt-ridden family, but she's grown tired of fixing their mistakes. Things take a dark turn when her mother's reckless gambling puts them in danger, and when they're forced to flee, Tru takes on the responsibility of keeping them safe. While on the run, they meet dragon lord Elang, who is forced to live without his heart. He asks Tru to marry him in hopes of breaking the curse placed on him by his ruthless grandfather. Tru, eager to save her family and hopefully uncover the truth about her long-

Continued on p.100

GRACIELA IN THE ABYSS
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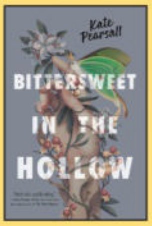
Book Map: Enchanted Forests

By Allie Stevens

Though sometimes enchanted forests are the stuff of dreamy fairy tales, they can also both hide the monster and be the monster of a story. In the books listed here, the woods range from safe havens for vengeful witches to rage-filled villains in their own right and everything in between.

Where the Dark Stands Still, by A. B. Poranek



Bittersweet in the Hollow, by Kate Pearsall

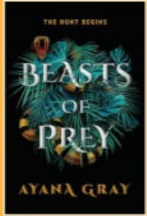
Edgewood, by Kristen Ciccarelli

Wild Huntress, by Emily Lloyd-Jones

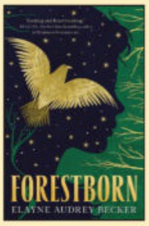
Under the Heron's Light, by Randi Pink

The Forest King's Daughter, by Elly Blake

Forest Grimm, by Kathryn Purdie



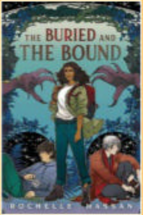
Beasts of Prey, by Ayana Gray



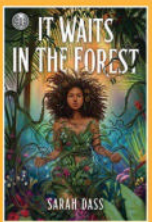
Forestborn, by Elayne Audrey Becker

Saint Juniper's Folly, by Alex Crespo

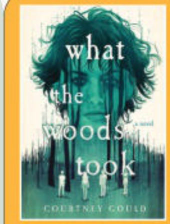
We Are All So Good at Smiling, by Amber McBride



The Buried and the Bound, by Rochelle Hassan



It Waits in the Forest, by Sarah Dass

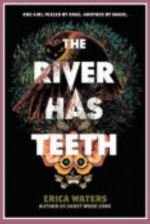


What the Woods Took, by Courtney Gould

The Poison Season, by Mara Rutherford

Lonely Places, by Kate Anderson

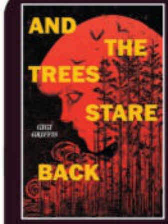
The Forest Demands Its Due, by Kosoko Jackson



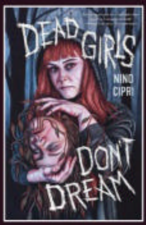
The River Has Teeth, by Erica Waters

When the Bones Sing, by Ginny Myers Sain

The Unfinished, by Cheryl Isaacs



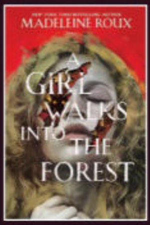
And the Trees Stare Back, by Gigi Griffis



Dead Girls Don't Dream, by Nino Cipri

Dead Girls Walking, by Sami Ellis

Don't Let the Forest In, by C. G. Drews



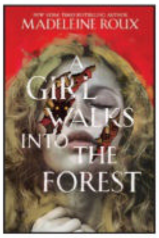
A Girl Walks into the Forest, by Madeleine Roux

Continued from p.97

lost father, agrees. In a breathtakingly detailed fantasy setting, Lim combines an enchanting underwater world, a clairvoyant artist, and a brooding half-dragon hero in a story marked by a slow-burning, tension-filled romance. Tru and Elang's undeniably passionate chemistry comes through clearly in their banter, and Lim's lyrical prose superbly blends whimsical and action-packed moments. This emotional, thoughtful story about love and found family is perfect for romantasy fans. —*Aurora Dominguez*

★ A Girl Walks into the Forest.
By Madeleine Roux.

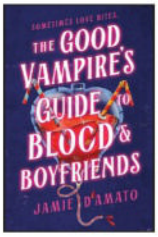
June 2025. 336p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $19.99 (9780063284845). Gr. 8–12.



A girl walks into the forest, but something much different walks out in Roux's latest offering, a genre-blending folk horror that follows Valla, who loses her physical beauty and finds her true self in exchange. Chosen to wed wealthy Count Leonid based only on her portrait, intrepid Valla sets off toward her fate in the unforgiving and dangerous Gottyar Wood. It doesn't take long for the forest to lash out, though, and an altercation leaves her previously beautiful face—the one she was depending on for survival—marred and hideous. Without her beauty, the count is uninterested, and Valla realizes that no one is coming to save her but herself. This dark and foreboding mash-up is rife with shadowy secrets and scary European fairy-tale touches; Valla's fate is inextricably linked with the legendary and fierce Baba Yaga. Readers will find themselves pulled down into the darkness of the Gottyar with Valla as she finds the bravery and determination it takes any young girl to find her true self in a world set up to reward only what can be seen on the surface. Excellent character development, unsettling and atmospheric world building, and numerous but well-woven folklore references combine for a deeply suspenseful, darkly vengeful tale of self-discovery. —*Allie Stevens*

★ The Good Vampire's Guide to Blood and Boyfriends.
By Jamie D'Amato.

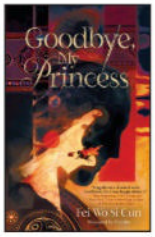
Aug. 2025. 336p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $20 (9781250321206). Gr. 9–12.



When it comes to vampire dates, re-creating the spider monkey scene from *Twilight* deserves 10 out of 10 fangs—no additional notes. Of course, since (the very human) Cole caught the newly turned Brennan in the midst of blood larceny before they started dating, they got to skip the awkward preface of a vampiric reveal. The timely arrival of two experienced vampires who take Brennan under their wing fortunately curtails his life of crime, but he quickly learns that ethical vampires are hard to come by—and that one of the human-killing variety seems to be stalking campus. Even as circumstances get increasingly suspicious, narrative attention focuses predominantly on Brennan and Cole's developing relationship, leaving the investigation itself as an occasionally forgotten B-plot. Interestingly, it's suicide and not murder that takes up the most narrative attention: Brennan attempted the previous semester, and Cole's older brother completed an attempt several years prior. The topic is handled with matter-of-fact poise that respects the varied experience of both the characters and readers. Despite this, the story is overall fairly light and even goofy at times. With fun, relatable characters, this is an excellent addition to the diverse resurgence of teen vampire fiction. —*Austin Ferraro*

★ Goodbye, My Princess.
By Fei Wo Si Cun. Tr. by Tianshu.

June 2025. 560p. Simon & Schuster, $21.99 (9781665971041). Gr. 8–12.



As the ninth princess of Xiliang, who's married to Crown Prince Li Chengyin, Qu Xiaofeng spends her days surreptitiously sneaking out of the Court of Spring with her dearest friend, A'du. Together, they cross-dress as men and get into bar brawls while basking in commoner life. At court, life is much different. As a treaty bride, Xiaofeng must copy her manuals, attend to nobility, and suffer frequent fights with her indifferent, loveless husband. Between the dangers of the Chinese monarchy's political intrigue and her husband, Xiaofeng struggles to reconcile her perceived worth compared to the whole kingdom and her desire to be loved. To complicate matters further, the mysterious Gu Jian abducts her and throws her into a river that leads her to recollect a past washed away by the River Oblivion. This past is so consequential and harrowing, Xiaofeng must decide if her memories of Li Chengyin are enough to unravel her complex web of feelings in the present. Cun's emotionally compelling narrative masterfully weaves in and out of themes of love and hatred before coming to the crossroads of a poignant yet antagonistic relationship in a finale that sticks with readers long after finishing the tale. Told nonchronologically, this tragic romance includes five additional short stories that expand the plot and offer shades of sorrow and joy. —*Nick Mullenmeister*

Heir of Storms.
By Lauryn Hamilton Murray.

June 2025. 416p. Roaring Brook, $20.99 (9781250348159). Gr. 9–12.

Fans of fantasies centered on elemental powers, royal intrigue, and romantic drama will love this magical, emotionally charged series with a lushly described world, a fierce heroine, and nonstop tension. Blaze, the first Rain Singer in generations, inadvertently unleashed a catastrophic flood when she was born into a prestigious fire-wielding family. They view her gifts as a curse and treat her like a walking omen. But she's done with hiding, so she enters the Choosing Rite, a dangerous competition in which gifted teens fight for elemental thrones. There, she's torn between a charismatic crown prince and a dark, mysterious newcomer. While the novel engages in many familiar tropes, it feels fresh, thanks to the characters' realistic issues related to trust, the depiction of stress in a highly competitive environment, and lively banter—especially between Blaze and her twin brother—that breaks up the mounting drama. Strong world building and complications of political intrigue in the royal court add lots of tension as the narrative rushes toward a surprising ending. Fans of romance and fantasy will appreciate this compelling series starter from a debut author. —*Aurora Dominguez*

Hit Me with Your Best Charm.
By Lillie Vale.

July 2025. 400p. Viking, paper, $13.99 (9780593623916). Gr. 9–12.

Prior's End is a superstitious and possibly magical town, and its Fall Festival serves as a reminder of its whimsical charm. But for Nova, it's a reminder that her father disappeared while hiking seven years ago. Kiara is the girl who gets everything she wants—including every person Nova has ever crushed on. When Nova accidentally ends up hexing Kiara with bad luck, they decide they must venture into the woods to find a cure. Joining them are a string of Kiara's exes, and their quest is making it harder for Nova to resist her lingering feelings for Kiara. The story is a mash-up of survival, light magic, a little mystery, and a gentle exploration of grief. At times, the writing gets bogged down in the forest with camping, the numerous characters bickering, Nova's doubting, and a lack of direction or answers. While the mystery and magic can be a bit convoluted, this is a good pick for readers wanting something with eerie magic and a dash of queer romance. —*Sarah Bean Thompson*

If We Survive This.
By Racquel Marie.

June 2025. 336p. Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (9781250352699). Gr. 9–12.

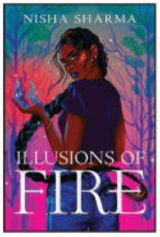
Outside Los Angeles, Flora and her brother, Cain, survive by scavenging and staying out of sight. Rabids, humans infected with a mutated form of rabies, hunt and eat any uninfected in their way. One day, hope comes in the form of a radio message from their father, making them believe he'd survived his scouting trip to an old vacation cabin. The two decide to journey north to meet up with him, but unfortunately, a danger more lethal than rabids lurks amid the ravaged cityscape—

other people. Marie remains steadfastly true to the tropes of zombie fiction espoused in works such as *The Walking Dead* and *28 Days Later* to create a bleak, visceral tale that is also intimately personal. As she slowly becomes inured to killing, Flora increasingly struggles with inner demons stemming from her own anxieties, the death of her mother, and the sudden reappearance of an old love. Readers turned off by violence and gore should steer clear, but for lovers of zombie fiction, this book epitomizes the best of what the subgenre has to offer. —*Reinhardt Suarez*

Illusions of Fire.

By Nisha Sharma.

Oct. 2025. 384p. Union Square, $18.99 (9781454947776). Gr. 9–12.



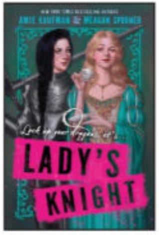
Something sinister is afoot in upstate New York, where expert archer Laila Bansal, a Daughter of Draupadi born of fire and blood, is laying low with her three adopted rakshasi masis, who are tasked with keeping her safe in exchange for immortality. The appearance of a cunning and attractive stranger, Karan, who also has roots in the Mahabharata, changes everything. The problem is his asura-hunter lineage, and at the behest of his uncle of questionable motives, he's been assigned to return with Laila's head to trade for information on the whereabouts of his missing parents. But Laila's not an asura, and she senses at first touch that she's supposed to have a child with him to continue her bloodline. When her masis suddenly begin to age, Karan's parents are still MIA, and more demonic beings are coming to the forefront, they'll have to uncover a way to stay alive and save the universe. Though there are no vampires or werewolves here, this is a fast-paced continuation of a Hindu epic with all the trappings of truly riveting YA fantasy: mythology, prophecies, magic, fiery romance, and gripping fight sequences. Alternating third-person chapters will bring readers closer to Laila and Karan's individual backstories. Good luck trying not to root for them both. —*Mahjabeen Syed*

Lady's Knight.

By Amie Kaufman and Meagan Spooner.

June 2025. 432p. HarperCollins/Storytide, $19.99 (9780062893390). Gr. 8–12.

Every four years, the county of Darkhaven plays host to the Tournament of Dragonslayers, and this year's competition comes with an extra incentive for competitors: the winner will earn the hand and dowry of Lady Isobelle, much to Lady Isobelle's frustration. Gwen, a local blacksmith's daughter who actually does most of the blacksmithing herself, wants nothing more than to don the armor of a knight and compete rather than spend her days in a hot forge. When the two girls meet and sparks begin to fly, Isobelle pulls Gwen into a plan that has the potential to save them both from their unwanted fates, if Gwen can just pull off pretending to be Sir Gawain and avoid the notice of Lord Whimsitt, Isobelle's awful guardian. Easier said than done, but Gwen is up for the challenge. Characters' modern sensibilities contrast smoothly with the medieval setting, and the romance between the main characters is sparkling and witty. Fourth-wall breaks are done to hilarious effect, and this cozy knight's tale is as charming as it is funny and warm. A truly enjoyable rom-com. —*Allie Stevens*



The Last Tiger.

By Julia Riew and Brad Riew.

July 2025. 416p. Penguin/Kokila, $21.99 (9798217002047). Gr. 8–12.

When Eunji is spotted at a tiger-slaying ceremony by one of her royal father's servants, Seung, she makes a deal to prepare him for the Adachi training academy entrance exam,

Continued on p.104

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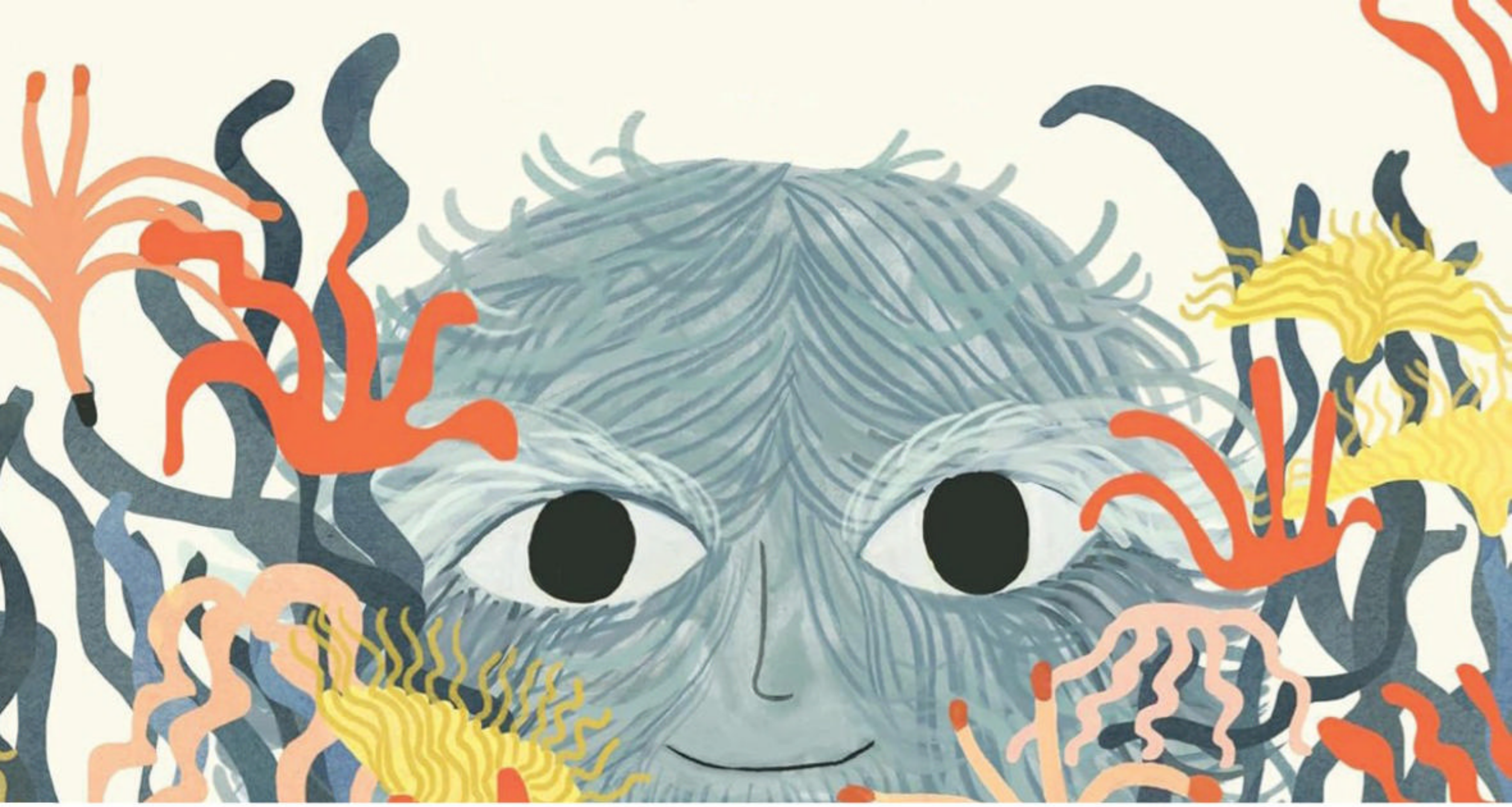


Art from *Alma and the Beast*, written and illustrated by Esmé Shapiro.

Booklist Essentials

Magic in Nature

by Julia Smith

the Flower Garden
Renée Kurilla
LORE OF THE WILD
FOLKLORE & WISDOM FROM NATURE
CLAIRE COCK-STARKEY
ILLUSTRATED BY AITCH
WIDE EYED

The natural world is a wondrous place. Indeed, some might even say it's magical. The books below lean into this perspective, encouraging children to get outside and keep their eyes peeled for fairies, gnomes, and more while they're at it.

Alma and the Beast. By Esmé Shapiro. Illus. by the author. 2019. 44p. Tundra (9780735263963). PreS–Gr. 1.

Everything in Alma's world is hairy, from the trees to the mushrooms to Alma herself. But when a mostly hairless beast (a young human girl) wanders into Alma's yard, a charming adventure unfolds. Shapiro's worlds, both hairy and human, are warmly imaginative, and young readers will love the idea that an entirely new realm might be accessible simply by climbing the right tree.

Backyard Fairies. By Phoebe Wahl. Illus. by the author. 2018. 32p. Knopf (9781524715274). PreS–Gr. 2.

A rosy-cheeked girl is convinced fairies live in her backyard, but—despite her best efforts—she never sees them. Enchanting collage illustrations reveal what the girl can't see: tiny, luminous sprites hiding in tree stumps, under logs, and in a thicket of thorns. While the fairies are surely magical, Wahl makes the forest itself just as bewitching, with a wide variety of plants and animals.

Fairy Walk. By Gaia Cornwall. Illus. by the author. 2025. 40p. Candlewick (9781536230710). PreS–K.

A forest beckons three children with the promise of fairies tucked among its foliage. With a wave to their moms, they set off, their pup bounding by their sides. They venture over a stream and into the woods, peering beneath rocks and around logs in hopes of spotting a fairy. Young readers will delight in the tiny, magical beings flitting through the illustrations, noticed only by the dog.

The Flower Garden. By Renée Kurilla. Illus. by the author. 2022. 80p. Abrams/Amulet (9781419750205). K–Gr. 3.

After hearing her mother talk about bees, Anna invites Tess over to plant seeds so the bees will have "bee food." After planting, the two friends fall asleep in the sun, waking to find a forest of flowers above their heads. May, a garden gnome, offers to show them around. This delightful, lushly illustrated graphic novel is perfect for early chapter-book readers.

Forest Magic for Kids: How to Find Fairies, Make a Secret Fort, and Cook Up an Elfin Picnic. By Susie Spikol. Illus. by Renia Metallinou. 2025. 144p. Gibbs Smith (9781423665533). Gr. 2–5.

Naturalist Spikol offers kids a magic-dusted guide to outdoor exploration and natural crafts. Science facts readily interweave with a smattering of folklore as kids try their hands at making magic wands from sticks—as well as making moss gardens, forts, leaf crowns, pixie dust, and spore prints—while watching for wildflower fairies, elves, gnomes, and trolls.

How to Spot a Magical Woodland Creature: A Field Guide to Enchanted Forest Animals. By Sarah Glenn Marsh. Illus. by Lilla Bölecz. 2025. 136p. Running Press Kids (9780762488049). Gr. 3–6.

With opening nature tips like leave no trace and keep a respectful distance from wildlife, this guide is designed to help readers identify enchanted versions of common forest animals. The charming compendium is comprised of illustrated profiles that feature quick facts and descriptions of the creatures' appearances, habits, and magical abilities.

The Hidden World of Gnomes. By Lauren Soloy. Illus. by the author. 2023. 96p. Tundra (9780735271043). K–Gr. 2.

Did you know there are tiny gnomes living all around? Like any reputable guidebook, this one imparts basic gnome-knowledge first, covering eating habits, celebrations, and seasonal observances. It then delves into specific gnome professions and endless activities (leaf riding or snail stacking, anyone?). Soloy concludes with a reminder that there is always magic to be found in the world around us.

If Flowers Were Little Monsters: A Field Guide to Fact and Fantasy. By Claire Le Men. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Jeffrey K. Butt. 2024. 96p. Helvetiq (9783039640362). Gr. 2–5.

In this quirky nature primer, Le Men reimagines 20 common flowers as delightful botanical beasts. Carefully observed watercolor vignettes introduce each flower's physical characteristics before Le Men playfully presents a "monster" version of the blossom. Both an introduction to common botany and a charming invitation to be observant and imaginative, the book closes with an inviting "how-to" guide sure to engage kids in creating their own flower monsters.

Lore of the Wild. By Claire Cock-Starkey. Illus. by Aitch. 2021. 80p. Wide Eyed (9780711260719). Gr. 2–5.

This collection of nature-related folk beliefs from cultures around the world features stunning, intricate illustrations that span double-page spreads. Each of the six sections (Animals; Birds; Bugs; Flowers, Plants, and Trees; Weather Lore; Omens) is introduced by a folktale and then followed by traditional sayings, beliefs, or superstitions that fit the theme.

Luna and the Moon Rabbit. By Camille Whitcher. Illus. by the author. 2018. 32p. Sterling (9781912233250). PreS–Gr. 1.

Drawing inspiration from East Asian folklore, this imaginative tale begins with a young girl leaving a rice cake on her windowsill in hopes of securing a visit by the moon rabbit. A magical, dreamy adventure begins when the giant white rabbit accepts the treat and leads Luna on a nighttime journey chasing fireflies through nearby woods, exploring a field of dandelions, wishing on falling stars, and visiting a koi pond.

Art by Lilla Bölecz, from *How to Spot a Magical Woodland Creature*, by Sarah Glenn Marsh.

A Recipe for Magic Potion. By Jack Henseleit. Illus. by Natasja Horne. 2025. 32p. Bright Light (9781761214110). PreS–Gr. 2.

Henseleit and Horne's picture-book guide to potion-making will send kids scurrying outside on a quest to collect ingredients, such as leaves, rocks, hose water, and flower petals. Its recommendations also include inviting along a friend or two, bringing a sturdy container, and reciting a magic incantation to properly charm the concoction. An imaginative enticement to outdoor play.

There's a Ghost in the Garden. By Kyo Maclear. Illus. by Katty Maurey. 2024. 56p. Enchanted Lion (9781592704057). K–Gr. 3.

Are ghosts real? If you ask the boy and grandpa in this quiet, enigmatic book, the answer is decidedly *yes*. The ghosts this pair looks for live in craggy corners of the garden, rustling in leaves and darting from the shadows. Spare illustrations evoke the contemplative, observational tone of the story, emphasizing the still moments when the boy and his grandpa pause to look, listen, and remember.

Art from *Backyard Fairies*, written and illustrated by Phoebe Wahl.

Continued from p.101

helping him develop ki powers in exchange for his silence. As they spend more time together, they grow fond of each other. After finding out he has failed the exam, a despondent Seung gently rejects Eunji's romantic confession. While Eunji attends the academy, she is forced by her father to marry the son of a Dragon diplomat. Back home, Seung comes across the last tiger, who presents him with ki powers. Further destruction ensues when the Dragon government gets desperate to slay the last tiger and destroy any history of the Tiger Kingdom. Along with her betrothed and the head of the Resistance movement, Eunji and Seung will have to make a choice to protect the tiger or sacrifice it. The Riew siblings' debut pulls inspiration from their grandparents' forbidden relationship during the Korean War. The story is told from both protagonists' perspectives, and readers will empathize with the protagonists' struggles of poverty and having little say in their future. There is mention of sexual abuse, which readers should take care with; however, the authors respectfully handle the content. A reminder that knowledge and kindness are powerful tools. —*Beronica Garcia*

Predatory Natures.
By Amy Goldsmith.

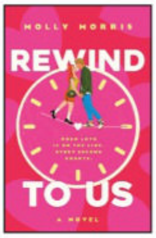
July 2025. 432p. Delacorte, $19.99 (9780593814314). Gr. 9–12.

After a series of personal tragedies leaves her friendless and aimless, Lara Williams finds herself uprooted, wanting nothing more than to escape the mess that's become her life. So when she gets the chance to work aboard the Banebury, a luxury train traveling through the lush European countryside, she jumps at the opportunity, determined to at least run away in style. Not even the unexpected presence of an old, maybe-sort-of flame among her fellow crew members can dampen her spirits. But shortly into the voyage, a mysterious set of siblings boards the Banebury, bringing two carriages overflowing with strange, beautiful flora—and an ancient, ominous force waiting to take root. Inspired by Welsh mythology and combining elements of folk horror and dark academia, Goldsmith cultivates a fierce, frightening fantasy that draws powerful parallels between folkloric tragedy and the grim mundanity of modern misogyny. *Predatory Natures* grafts itself into the flourishing genre of botanical horror, joining the ranks of Krystal Sutherland's *House of Hollow* (2021) and Andrea Hannah's *Where Darkness Blooms* (2023). —*Ricardo Reading*

Rewind to Us.
By Molly Morris.

June 2025. 336p. St. Martin's/Wednesday, $21 (9781250289728). Gr. 8–12.

The Mulligan family has the ability to rewind time exactly once per person, per life. Dixie Mulligan plans to use her Rewind to fix a mistake she made with her best friend, Sawyer, with whom she's in love. She arrives in Cielo Springs, California, for summer break, desperate to leave behind her life in New York City and make up with Sawyer. Except on the first night there, she discovers he's in some sort of relationship with another girl. So Dixie embarks on her plan to use her Rewind. But life is more complicated than it seems, and messing with time and people's memories has consequences. Morris' follow-up to *Annie LeBlanc Is Not Dead Yet* (2024) is equally tinged with magic, both in the actual speculative elements and the storytelling structure. The book is full of twists that build on one another; reading it is like unraveling layers of brilliance. Dixie and Sawyer's friendship is the foundation upon which this surreal tale of family, film, and friendship takes place. With a cast full of lovable side characters, a vibrant setting, and much to say about the film industry and art, Morris' latest is a fabulous ride that will entice readers across age groups. —*Karis Rogerson*



Soulmatch.
By Rebecca Danzenbaker.

July 2025. 496p. Simon & Schuster, $19.99 (9781665963701). Gr. 7–12.

Danzenbaker's debut novel tangles with questions of identity, destiny, and choice that are sure to resonate with teen readers. Sivon lives in a futuristic world where daily needs are automated, AI-enabled robots do most repetitive jobs, and everyone pays the price for their previous lives. Through a process called "kirling," each young adult learns about their soul's previous incarnations—material inheritances, romantic entanglements, and prior crimes included. Sivon's fears about her own past lives don't prepare her for the truth: she's a "new soul," one with no previous lives on record. Being a new soul catapults her to instant worldwide fame, but it comes with its own price. As the world watches, Sivon must discover—or decide—who she really is. This fresh, fast-paced take on the questions about identity, destiny, and choice that preoccupy so many teen minds is a solid sf pick for YA readers forging their own identities in a complex and demanding world. Hand to readers who couldn't get enough of Neal Shusterman's Arc of a Scythe series. —*Dani Ryskamp*

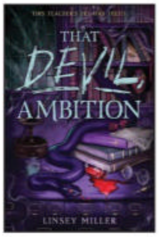
Tempest.
By K. Ibura.

June 2025. 304p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $19.99 (9780063081031). Gr. 8–12.

This fast-paced adventure will blow readers away. Veronique's mother died during Hurricane Katrina, leading her to live with MawMaw, isolated from the rest of the world. Veronique has an affinity for wind, but her control of it is precarious at best. After she saves a neighbor boy from drowning, MawMaw sends Veronique to live with her aunt's family in New Orleans, out of fear that she can no longer protect her. In New Orleans, Veronique finds family that she never knew she had and finally has the quintessential teen experience, until she learns that others have similar powers over the elements. Ibura's debut is an exciting contemporary fantasy reminiscent of *Legendborn* (2020). Veronique's fear of her powers, coupled with her elation at falling in love and having friends, makes her a dynamic character, but the story's pacing moves at such a speed that it's hard to form connections with anyone in this mystical world. Despite its lack of character development, lovers of superhero stories will devour this one. —*Amber Hayes*

That Devil, Ambition.
By Linsey Miller.

June 2025. 416p. HarperCollins/Storytide, $19.99 (9780063388611). Gr. 9–12.

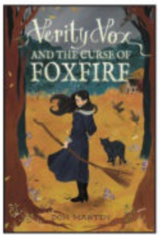


At the Stellarium, an exclusive school for magicians, 13 sixth-year students are selected for the honors class. The class is always taught by a devil, and the objective is for the students to kill the devil by the end of the school year. If they succeed, then they will graduate, their hefty student debts will be forgiven, and they will join the ranks of the elite, honorable magicians and enjoy all the prestige that entails. If they fail, their lives are all forfeit, and any individual who tries and fails dies immediately. The first part of this moody, atmospheric narrative introduces three students: Fabian, Credence, and Euphemia (Mia), best friends who are determined to succeed. The first term explodes with a jump scare. As time starts running out and students die, the survivors become more desperate, and what was once a competition becomes a concerted effort. Miller's text is richly written without weighing down the narrative, and the characters shine against the dark academia backdrop. The detail is astounding, ranging from what students wear under their robes to the way their clothes, hair, and hands are artfully daubed with ink to demonstrate their devotion to scholarship. The suspense rises subtly as the year progresses, and the storytelling is engrossing in this stunning debut. —*Donna Scanlon*

Verity Vox and the Curse of Foxfire.
By Don Martin.

Aug. 2025. 336p. Page Street YA, $18.99 (9798890032706). Gr. 7–12.

Witch-in-training Verity Vox has been called to the isolated Appalachian town of Foxfire, which has been cursed by otherworldly Earl, a huckster who promised to solve the town's problems in exchange for increasingly costly sacrifices. When Verity arrives, she finds a valley of withered crops, sick livestock, and a people deeply suspicious of magic. Verity won't give up, however, gradually mending broken items, fixing buildings, and growing magically productive gardens until she earns the trust of the people of Foxfire. But when she goes into the woods in search of a missing girl, she crosses Earl and unleashes his vindictive rage anew. Martin skillfully blends the cozy magic of healing and mending, conjured up by Verity's folk songs and nursery rhymes, with the eldritch horrors of Earl's twisted forest; Earl himself, whose incantations consist of distorted Bible verses, is composed of mismatched, rotten body parts and fetid hunks of wood. Martin's evocative, painterly descriptions bring it all to life, from a shape-shifting familiar to a pleasantly dusty dress shop to the grotesque approximation of a human shape attempted by an ancient god. Beneath it all is poignant subtext about poverty, neglect, the abuse of power, and the prison of conformity—but at heart, it's the witchy tale of home, belonging, and healing (with a quiet but well-earned queer romance) that will beguile readers. *—Sarah Hunter*



The Yomigaeri Tunnel.

By Kelly Murashige.

July 2025. 272p. Soho Teen, $19.99 (9781641297035). Gr. 9–12.

Rumor has it that the light at the end of the tunnel that Monika and Shiori are walking through is the literal resurrection of a deceased loved one. Both girls have suffered recent losses—Monika's classmate Shun overdosed, while Shiori's mother was killed in a car accident—and with every few steps in the tunnel, the girls are tossed into reliving another memory. At first, Monika's memories revolve around Shun, and Shiori's around her mother, but soon the girls are experiencing each other's memories and seeing other loved ones who have passed. Aside from the flood of exposition at the beginning, nearly the entire book takes place in flashbacks as Monika and Shiori traverse the tunnel, resulting in a plot that focuses on introspection more than action. Addiction and abuse are handled with gentle nuance as the two are pushed to explore the complications of the relationships in their lives, ultimately facing a big question: Do they want to perform resurrection, or do they actually want personal redemption? *—Austin Ferraro*

You've Awoken Her.

By Ann Dávila Cardinal.

June 2025. 288p. Harper, $19.99 (9780063299559). Gr. 9–12.

Ruthie and Gabriel have been friends since they were little, but Ruthie moved away to the high-priced Hamptons last year, leaving Gabriel behind in Queens. This summer, Gabi will be staying with Ruthie in her posh new digs, but a weird warning from a creepy woman on the train has him on high alert. When he arrives in the Hamptons and meets all of Ruthie's new friends, he feels out of place, and the weird dreams and visions—blood spurting out of toilets, strange whispering voices everywhere—aren't helping. Not to mention how everyone he meets is warning him of danger, and no one will give him a straight answer. Are there Lovecraftian monsters lurking beneath the sea in the Hamptons, or has Gabriel just watched too many horror movies? Cardinal's young adult debut, *Breakup from Hell* (2023), gave readers a feeling of realism, even as angels and demons appeared from nowhere. This sophomore novel has a similar bent, and readers will appreciate Gabriel's humor and tangible anxiety as he gets deeper into Ruthie's new life. *—Stacey Comfort*

Middle Readers

Adia Kelbara and the High Queen's Tomb.

By Isi Hendrix.

June 2025. 352p. HarperCollins/Storytide, $19.99 (9780063266384). Gr. 3–7.

Adia Kelbara is back in the second installment of the Circle of Shamans trilogy. In her first adventure, Adia and Emperor Darian vanquished the demon Olark—or so they thought. When residents of Zaria begin experiencing sleeping spells and corpses rise, trying to get Adia's eyes for a mysterious person known as the High Queen, Adia and Darian discover that Olark may not be done with them yet. Adia's shamanic powers continue to grow as she goes through initiation and learns who the High Queen is, as well as her relationship to Olark. Thyme, Nami, Gini, Bubbles (Adia's cat), and a host of other characters return as Adia begins her first official year at the Academy of Shamans. Readers will be kept in suspense over who is behind the chaos in Zaria until the very last page. This thrilling sequel to *Adia Kelbara and the Circle of Shamans* (2023) will have readers excitedly awaiting the final book in Hendrix's Afrofantasy trilogy. *—Ashley Leffel*

The AI Incident.

By J. E. Thomas.

July 2025. 256p. Levine Querido, $18.99 (9781646145089). Gr. 4–7.

Serial foster child Malcolm's determination to keep his head down and stay prepared to move on takes a hit when he lands with Sylvia Bettye, a temporary foster mom, and enters a new school in crisis, thanks to the arrival of FRANCIS, an experimental AI supposedly programmed to boost students' test scores. Soon, Malcolm goes from being a self-isolating "new kid" to joining a circle of classmates watching the increasingly aggressive bot elbow teachers aside, pressure administrators with unauthorized emails to parents promoting its tutorial skills, and hack the school's computer systems to find out the questions on upcoming tests. While presenting a sensitive picture of the fostering system, sympathetic to both the children and the adults who run it, Thomas dishes up a cast of complex, (mostly) likeable children and grown-ups, expertly showing relationships in flux while steering events to satisfying resolutions that leave her protagonist with new friends and the real prospect of a much-desired "forever home." The perils of replacing live teaching with AI instruction get a good, brisk airing too. *—John Peters*

AJ Torres and the Treasure of Captain Grayshark.

By José Pablo Iriarte.

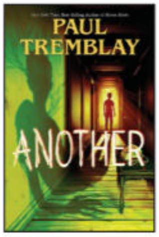
June 2025. 208p. Knopf, $17.99 (9780593703748). Gr. 3–5.

With his sophomore children's book, Iriarte delivers a swashbuckling good time. Twelve-year-old AJ and his friend Jayden discover a gold coin on the beach after a hurricane wreaks havoc on Miami. Jayden's mother has lost her job, and AJ reasons that finding more gold coins could keep Jayden from having to move away and also help his own family's struggling business. Aware of the legend of Captain Grayshark, whose treasure sank off the haunted Scream Island, the boys hope to gain more insight by recruiting their ghost-expert classmate, Andrea. The three head to Scream Island, where they encounter the spirit of Captain Grayshark, who wants his treasure back. This *Goonies*-style romp keeps things light while maintaining a thread of tension as the kids search for Grayshark's treasure—now to placate the phantom pirate hoard. Plenty of laughs will be found along the way, both in the humorous dialogue and the hilarity of the pirates learning about modern life. Satisfying character development further enriches this enjoyable treasure-seeking adventure. *—Ana Menchaca*

★ Another.

By Paul Tremblay.

July 2025. 256p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, $19.99 (9780063396357). Gr. 4–7.



The antique rotary phone Casey's parents brought home struck the boy as odd even before it uttered its quavering, sickly ring—despite the ringer being turned off. And it's via this phone that Casey's mother agrees to let a friend of Casey's come over to play. Except Casey hasn't had any friends since an embarrassing incident at school. Unease mingles with curiosity and a little excitement as Casey awaits the arrival of his supposed friend, and then Tremblay gives creepiness incarnate a grand entrance. A man lugging a dusty burlap sack arrives at the house, and when he opens the twitching bundle, a boy that "looked like a living mannequin" is revealed. Thus, Morel enters Casey's life and gradually begins to take it over. Tremblay capitalizes on the off-kilter tension, gradually building it into genuine

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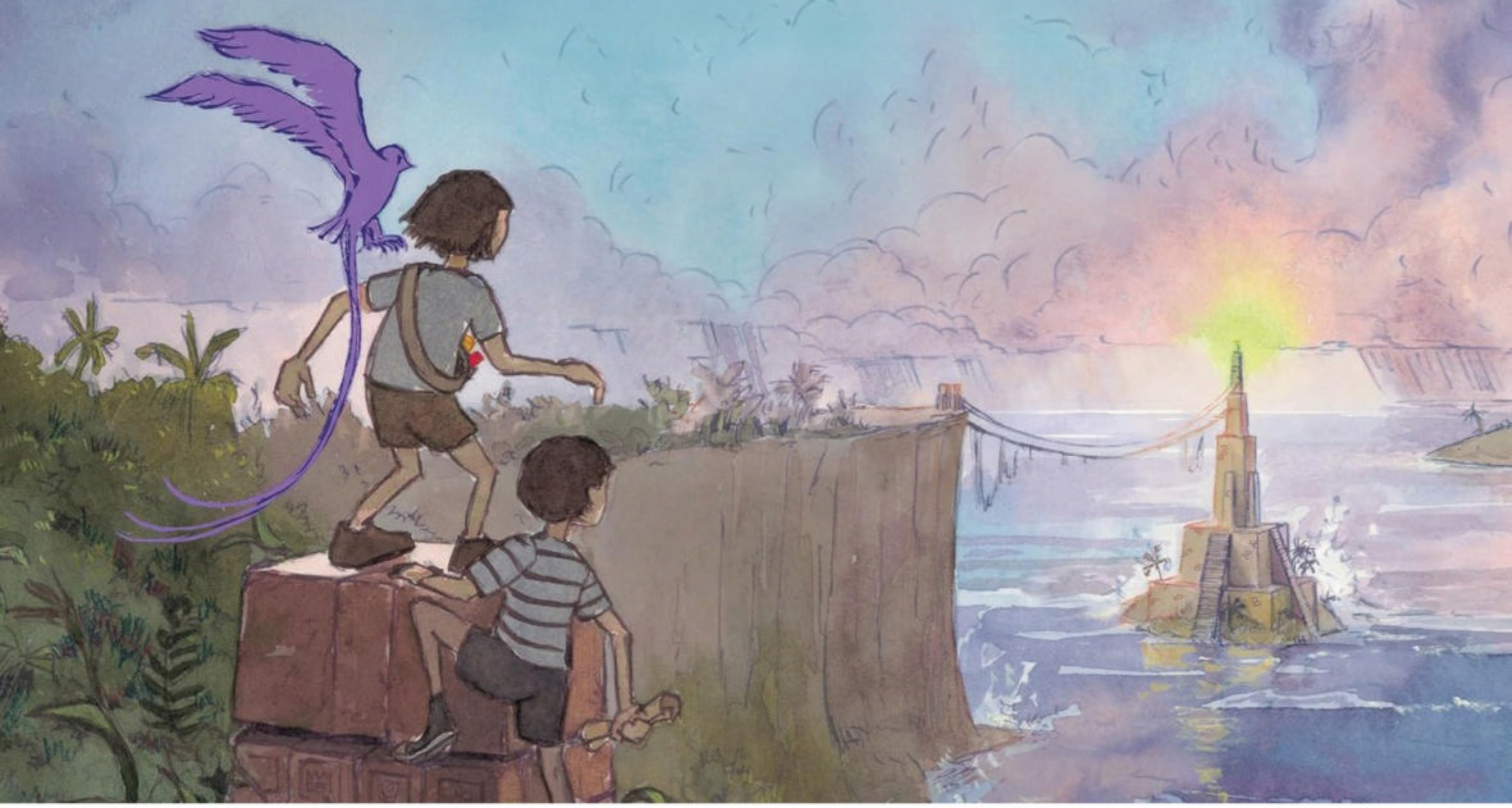


Art from *Quest*, written and illustrated by Aaron Becker.

Booklist Essentials

Epic Fantasy Picture Books

by Ronny Khuri

When it comes to books, epic fantasy typically conjures images of huge, heavy tomes or long, ongoing series, but with the genre invading mainstream pop culture, its influence has seeped into the most unlikely section imaginable: picture books. Much like a hobbit, though, even the smallest books can bear the weight of a large world and a great story. The following picture books take their cues from fantasy tropes, filling pages with heroes and evils, quests and courage, wizards and whimsy, and wide landscapes teeming with mythical creatures and magical mayhem.

The LITTLE WOODEN ROBOT and the LOG PRINCESS
TOM GAULD
Once Upon a DRAGON'S FIRE
BEATRICE BLUE

Bo the Brave. By Bethan Woollvin. Illus. by the author. 2020. 32p. Peachtree (9781682631829). PreS–Gr. 1.

All Bo wants is to go monster hunting with her brothers, but after they leave her behind in the castle, she decides to venture forth on her own. Bo's trek leads her to a series of meetings with misunderstood monsters, and when a distraught dragon reveals that its baby was stolen, Bo joins her new friends on a rescue mission.

Drawn Onward. By Daniel Nayeri. Illus. by Matt Rockefeller. 2024. 40p. HarperAlley (9780063277168). PreS–Gr. 3.

This marvel of a palindromic picture book sees a distraught boy set out on a classic hero's journey to find an "answer" after losing his mother. Rockefeller creates a series of stunning spreads as the boy travels through various terrains and fantastical encounters, fleeing from danger to danger before reaching his goal and then, inevitably, reversing course.

Here Be Dragons. By Susannah Lloyd. Illus. by Paddy Donnelly. 2024. 40p. Quarto/Frances Lincoln (9780711256606). PreS–Gr. 2.

An epic world map (with a section labeled "Here Be Dragons") fittingly precedes this tongue-in-cheek tale of a hapless knight going off in search of the fabled beast, which everyone claims does not exist. After scouring the lands, the knight finds what he was looking for—though he doesn't even realize it.

The Knight of Little Import. By Hannah Batsel. Illus. by the author. 2023. 40p. Carolrhoda (9781728450995). K–Gr. 3.

In the small medieval hamlet of Little

Import, Charlie longs for the knightly adventures found in the much larger Biggerborough—namely, slaying monsters. When she finally happens upon some townsfolk in need, she's able to use a little imagination and ingenuity to capture her very first monsters.

Knight Owl. By Christopher Denise. Illus. by the author. 2022. 48p. Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano (9780316310628). PreS–Gr. 2.

Although Owl is small, he has big dreams of becoming a knight. After joining the Knight Night Watch, he comes face to face with a hungry dragon, who descends upon the castle ramparts to have Owl for a midnight snack. With some quick thinking, Owl proves himself clever and brave in the solution he devises, saving himself and the other knights, too.

The Little Wooden Robot and the Log Princess. By Tom Gauld. Illus. by the author. 2021. 40p. Holiday/Neal Porter (9780823446988). PreS–Gr. 3.

In this captivating, original fairy tale, two magical children adopted by a king and a queen share a series of fantastical adventures after the princess, who shape-shifts into a log whenever she falls asleep, is tossed away and her brother, a wooden robot, sets out to rescue her.

The Most Boring Book Ever. By Brandon Sanderson. Illus. by Kazu Kibuishi. 2024. 48p. Roaring Brook (9781250843661). K–Gr. 3.

A boy sitting in a chair suddenly finds himself plummeting through the sky as humdrum narration seems at odds—but technically isn't—with the madcap action presented in the dynamic illustrations. A series of fantasy (and sf) elements bursts into scene as he falls, calculating a way to survive. A sure-fire crowd pleaser at storytime.

Nobody Likes a Goblin. By Ben Hatke. Illus. by the author. 2016. 40p. First Second (9781626720817). PreS–Gr. 2.

After a quiet morning, affable Goblin's dungeon is stormed by a horde of adventurers, who make off with all his treasure, as well as Goblin's friend Skeleton. As Goblin ventures out to save his friend, he must face how most people (and elves) feel about him. A friendship story with a happily-ever-after.

Once upon a Dragon's Fire. By Beatrice Blue. Illus. by the author. 2021. 40p. Clarion (9780358272427). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this friendship tale, two children set out from their village to confront an evil dragon who may have caused a snowstorm, but they're surprised to discover he's actually cold, scared, and lonely. To help, the kids concoct a story about a kind dragon, and the creature is so touched that he discovers his fire, which he uses to melt the snow and warm the village.

Quest. By Aaron Becker. Illus. by the author. 2014. 40p. Candlewick (9780763665951). Gr. 1–3.

In this sequel to *Journey*, a king appears, pursued by knights, and hands over a special map. The two kids again cross over into a fantastical realm, through underwater ruins, dense jungles, precarious towers, and frosted mountaintops. Quick thinking and imagination supersede combat as they evade the pursuing army and return order to the kingdom.

Seven Ways through the Woods. By Jenn Reese. Illus. by Devin Elle Kurtz. Sept. 2025. 40p. Greenwillow (9780063356269). K–Gr. 3.

A girl confronted with the common fantasy trope of a dark forest is advised by a narrator on seven different ways to traverse the wide wood: follow the path, ride a griffin, stow away on a moss giant, take the sprite tunnels, ride a raft of crystal serpents, use a portal flower, or maybe just step in and stay awhile.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice. By Gerda Muller. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Polly Lawson. 2020. 24p. Floris (9781782506287). PreS–Gr. 3.

In a story rooted in folklore, Oliver is apprenticed to a sorcerer, who reluctantly teaches him words that make objects come alive and obey orders. Oliver promises not to use magic while his master is away, but when he breaks his word, he makes a mess of the village.

Super Happy Magic Forest. By Matty Long. Illus. by the author. 2016. 32p. Scholastic (9780545860598). K–Gr. 2.

At the behest of wise Old Oak, a unicorn, gnome, toadstool, pixie, and centaur embark on an epic quest to retrieve the Mystical Crystals of Life and save their home. As the heroes cross frozen lands, a haunted forest, and dangerous dungeons, readers will pore over illustrations packed with magical creatures and goofy details. See also the follow-up, *Super Slug of Doom* (2017).

Art from *Bo the Brave*, written and illustrated by Bethan Woollvin.

Continued from p.105

horrors. He masterfully uses his limited set and cast—the action is kept almost entirely to Casey's house and its few inhabitants—exploring Casey's mind, anxieties, and fraying sense of reality. Well regarded in the adult horror space, Tremblay confidently strides into the middle-grade arena with an offering on par with Kevin Oppel's *The Nest* (2015). Malicious mushrooms, the power of art, COVID-19, clinical anxiety, and personal agency all find their ways into the narrative, and readers will be horribly enthralled by it all—in the best possible way. *—Julia Smith*

Beinoni.

By Mari Lowe.

July 2025. 272p. Levine Querido, $18.99 (9781646145065). Gr. 4–8.

There can be no evil in a Beinoni time—at least, that's what Ezra Safran has been told. He is the Nivchar, the once-in-a-generation "chosen one," tasked with eliminating all evil from the world. He's training for a battle against evil, set for the night of his bar mitzvah. But being the chosen one is not easy; there's still homework, demands from parents, and challenging friendships to navigate. Furthermore, Ezra begins to notice car crashes, falling test scores and myriad circumstances that shouldn't be occurring in a Beinoni time. He worries that something may be very wrong, but his parents and teachers don't seem to believe him. To figure out what's going on, Ezra seeks out a potential ally in his misbehaving classmate, Aryeh, to see if there's still a chance at saving humanity. The latest release by Sydney Taylor Book Award winner Lowe is part mystery, part Jewish fairy tale, and plenty of fun. Readers will be rooting for Ezra as he does his best to save the world. *—Aryn Prestia*

The Boy, the Mountain, and the Serpent Who Ate the Moon.

By Caris Avendaño Cruz.

July 2025. 320p. Farrar, $17.99 (9780374389178). Gr. 4–7.

Every resident of Santo Cristo knows that trouble starts at sundown, when thick fog settles over the town. Anyone who strays from the red-lit paths tends to disappear into the murk, never to be seen again. Fearless Bayani barely ever heeds the warnings, and during a rare evening festival, the promise of a shortcut beckons him across a peculiar bridge with his little sister, Isay, and cousin Aaron in tow. To their shock, the bridge pulls up its footings and disappears, leaving the bewildered trio stranded in the Land of Night. When the children are separated by sinister circumstances, they'll have to face menacing mythological beings, a hostile landscape, and their own deepest fears if there's any hope of surviving the ordeal. This fantasy spins Filipino folklore into a taut and touching tale. Deliciously eerie and occasionally macabre descriptions lend light horror to the proceedings, though unexpected friendships and Isay's unflagging optimism cast a hopeful glow. An unusual and enthralling exploration of what it means to hold onto light in a dark world. *—Emily Graham*

Elvira Vance and the Monster Mystery.

By Kacy Ritter.

July 2025. 320p. HarperCollins/Storytide, $19.99 (9780063348578). Gr. 4–7.

Ritter goes pretty hard on her home state in this thinly disguised allegorical caper. In the West Texas town of Marfa, simmering tensions between humans and the large local population of cryptids and mythological creatures come to a boil when the coveted "Monarch of Fright" crown—slated to be awarded during the upcoming Marfa Monster Festival—disappears, along with ne'er-do-well chupacabra Cal Shadevale. Has the latter been "monsternapped," as biracial half-siren and amateur sleuth Elvira Vance believes, or just taken, as the powder-like and enigmatic police detective Ace Price suggests? Elvira plunges into an investigation, surreptitiously rummaging through the files of the town's rabidly monsterphobic mayor, sailing past the town's "book-banning local library" to gather background information from a huge and predatory jackalope, and bargaining with the frightening ectoplasmic boss of a nearby ghost town along the way. The upbeat ending that comes in the wake of two noisy, if nondestructive, riots may challenge credulity, but most readers will be truly surprised when the caper's mastermind is at last unmasked. *—John Peters*

Encounter at Owl Rock.

By Rucker Moses.

June 2025. 288p. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, $17.99 (9780593696385). Gr. 5–7.

E.T. meets *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Mars Attacks!*, and many other sf flicks as orphaned twins Cypress and Oakley, along with their hard-punching bestie Jasmine (Jaz), discover that a local politician on the take and many of the other grown-ups in their small Georgia town have been taken over by bug-like aliens with bad intentions. Built around saving the planet but also rescuing and being rescued by a cute, telepathic, kudzu-eating alien hatchling, the ensuing romp is packed with heaping helpings of music and movie references ("Like, use the Force, Cy!")—not to mention, on the way to a zippy, last-second save, a string of exhilarating exploits aboard flying skateboards powered by mind-controlled alien tech. The pseudonymous authors fill out their young characters by brushing in some brotherly shoving and loving along the way, but personal relationships definitely take a back seat to riffs, high rides, and awesome aerial action. *—John Peters*

Gloam.

By Jack Mackay.

Aug. 2025. 208p. illus. Viking, $17.99 (9780593693834). Gr. 4–7.

After her mother's untimely passing, Gwen and her siblings, along with Henry, their stepfather, move into their late grandmother's house—known simply as "The House"—on the small, gray, aptly named island of Gloam. There they meet the ethereal Esme, a local babysitter whose demeanor and general attitude toward the bereaved family seems just a tad too perfect to be genuine, earning Gwen's immediate mistrust. Sure enough, Esme's mere presence heralds the arrival of a sinister, creeping darkness—one that threatens to consume not only the old, mysterious house itself but Gwen and her family as well. Now it's up to Gwen to unlock the house's secrets and banish the stirring nightmares within. Featuring a bold and tenacious protagonist, a supporting cast of instantly endearing characters, and a veritable phantasmagoria of ghastly ghouls, debut author Mackay's classic tale of children's horror is as chilling as it is heartfelt. Exploring themes of grief, resilience, and kinship, *Gloam* earns its spot on the shelf alongside the likes of Jonathan Auxier's *The Night Gardener* (2014) and Kenneth Oppel's *The Nest* (2015). *—Ricardo Reading*

The Island of Forgotten Gods.

By Victor Piñeiro.

Aug. 2025. 304p. Sourcebooks/Young Readers, $16.99 (9781728230559). Gr. 4–7.

Twelve-year-old Nico is on his way to Quebradillas, Puerto Rico, in the hopes of having a relaxing summer vacation at Abuela Luz's while his parents work on their crumbling marriage. Bitter over not getting accepted into a prestigious film school, Nico rallies his twin cousins, Kira and Nessi, to help him with a video essay on Puerto Rico for the Juan Miguel Film Fest. While the cousins amble around town, collecting some B-roll, they come across a demonic-looking creature that resembles a chupacabra. The trio slowly uncovers clues about the mythological creature, discovering how their abuela Luz ties in to the native Taíno history of gods, and figures out who is attempting to hunt them down. Piñeiro's newest fantasy is a beautiful and exciting love letter to Puerto Rico, featuring an enchanting landscape of Borinquen culture that also sheds light on the many environmental and financial difficulties the island faces. Children will resonate with both Nico and his cousins as they deal with the turbulent emotions of understanding their parents' separation. *—Beronica Garcia*

★ A Little Too Haunted.

By Justine Pucella Winans.

Sept. 2025. 288p. Bloomsbury, $17.99 (9781547616343). Gr. 4–7.

Most kids, when woken by a loud knocking at 3 a.m. in a purportedly haunted house, wouldn't respond with, "Heck yeah, witching hour." But most kids aren't Luna Catalano. The aspiring ghost hunter is eager to capture proof that her new house is haunted, not just for the thrill of it but to repair her relationship with her moms. The couple makes a living as home-improvement influencers, their gimmick being that they renovate haunted

A LITTLE TOO HAUNTED
JUSTINE PICELLI WINANS

houses, which Luna loved until learning that they were faking all the haunted effects on their channel. Luna, a true believer, had a meltdown during a livestream and revealed the dirty secret, losing the show followers and sponsors. While her moms view their current renovation project as a chance to rebrand, Luna is determined to prove that ghosts really exist—no rebranding required. Winans summons a quirky cast of characters and plenty of cats to her horror-comedy. Luna is a treasure of a protagonist, whose struggles with loneliness and IBS give depth to her innate weirdness (a compliment!) and paranormal passion. As Luna digs into the rumors about the house, she uncovers its grisly history while also making genuine friends and experiencing a queer awakening. It's a lot to deal with, but Winans gives Luna enough moxie and support to face everything that comes her way. —*Julia Smith*

Lunar.

By Chris Bradford. Illus. by Charlotte Grange.

July 2025. 72p. Union Square Kids, paper, $8.99 (9781454960362). Gr. 3–6.

Lunar, part of a sf series featuring three stand-alone books from Bradford, will leave readers starstruck. Living in a space hub with her moon miner dad, Luna enjoys going to the moon with him. On the latest trip, a meteor shower forces everyone to evacuate, but Luna gets left behind. She needs to figure out how to survive alone on the moon until she can be rescued. Thinking about the equipment left on the moon and how to maximize its use, Luna deploys her problem-solving skills. Readers will be rooting for Luna, but can she survive until her rescue? Bradford provides a fascinating insight into the life of an astronaut, such as how they go to the bathroom in space and how they breathe. The grayscale illustrations capture the story's action and offer more context about space and the characters' emotions. Perfect for reluctant readers, the slim adventure in a large, dyslexia-friendly font, features fast-paced action and interesting facts that will thrill young sf fans. —*Ana Menchaca*

Maggie and the Story Shadows.

By Annabelle Oh.

Aug. 2025. 272p. Disney/Hyperion, $17.99 (9781368114141). Gr. 3–6.

Even though her mother has been missing for months, middle-schooler Maggie has never given up believing that she is still alive. Unable to afford a PI to look for her, Maggie bands together with her friend Petra and annoying classmate Griffin to do their own search. Griffin, who lives to be an influencer, plans to create podcasts about their escapades, promising to split the profits with Maggie. With the persistence of youthful certainty, their search takes them down unimagined roads toward the discovery of who Maggie's mom really is and where she has gone. Combining folktales and cultural characters with fantasy, debut novelist Oh has created a story that moves lickety-split, leaving readers (and our protagonists) wondering whom to trust and ultimately leading to a surprising and satisfying conclusion. The sprinkling of literary Easter eggs will certainly spur young readers to research the background stories that crop up throughout this tale of love, family, and revenge. Bookish fantasy buffs will be swept up by this imaginative mystery. —*Beth Rosania*

Monster Slayer: A Beowulf Tale.

By Brian Patten. Illus. by Chris Riddell.

July 2025. 64p. Union Square Kids, paper, $8.99 (9781454960379). Gr. 3–7.

Beowulf is a story filled with warriors, monsters, and gore, but the language of the original—and the often stilted translations and adaptations used in classrooms—can be a major obstacle for middle-grade readers, who would otherwise thrill to the gruesome adventure. That all changes with this slim volume, originally published in the UK, which pares down the epic to a trim 60ish pages that center on the engaging battles and grotesque monsters while using language that is straightforward but still lyrical. Beowulf's defeat of Grendel and Grendel's mother is contained here, and Riddell's fine-lined illustrations nicely add to the atmosphere, particularly when depicting the monsters. Part of the publisher's Everyone Can Be a Reader line, the book features dyslexia-friendly font, comfortable space around the text, and a package that does not otherwise call out that it's designed for kids who might be struggling with literacy. A thoughtfully designed confidence builder that introduces readers to a foundational text with a thoroughly entertaining, well-paced monster tale. —*Sarah Hunter*

Monsters of Fife: Sea Dragons.

By Jane Yolen. Illus. by Celia Lowenthal.

June 2025. 128p. Charlesbridge Moves, $17.99 (9781623544737). Gr. 3–6.

Mythical monsters have returned to nineteenth-century Scotland, and Cat Douglas is proud to follow in her father's footsteps by taking part in her local monster-hunting society and acting as bait to draw out the creatures. After the society's usual monster hunts are interrupted by reports of an enormous sea dragon making off with a fisherman's children, Cat and her crew set off in search of the beast. It's the biggest mark they've ever faced, and it will take all of their bravery and cunning to rid the coastal village of their fearsome foe, though Cat feels the stirrings of sympathy inside her hunter's heart. The suspenseful series opener immediately establishes a superb Scottish setting, and despite the story's shorter length, it feels like a fully realized episode. There's a bit of gore, a lot of action, and the occasional comic-book illustration to add to the fun. Scottish terminology is scattered throughout, and vivid descriptions beautifully bring the characters—and monsters—to life. Readers on the hunt for a marvelous monster story will find it here. —*Emily Graham*

Mooncussers.

By Eli Brown. Illus. by Karin Rytter.

July 2025. 288p. Candlewick/Walker, $19.99 (9781536208528). Gr. 5–8.

A second Louisianna War has broken out, and Clover Elkin has been laying low with her faithful friend Nessa until the arrival of Miss Yamada. An oddities expert and leader of the newly established chapter of the Women's Service League, Miss Yamada is recruiting those entangled with oddities' powers to help destroy the unnatural vermin created by the Seamstress (Miniver Elkin). Eager to end the chaos unleashed by her mother, Clover commits her odd talents to the cause. Meanwhile, a sinister whispering from deep underground permeates the plot, sharing the curious story of a being who calls himself the Underking. No longer content with being the King of Dirt, the Underking fortifies his growing strength and ambitions with a scarecrow-like army and mutant creatures that soon become entangled with Miss Yamada's league, who call themselves mooncussers. Brown's imagination and voice-y character work are in fine form in this feisty sequel to *Oddity* (2021), and his latest villain is one for the history books. An ideal series for those not quite ready for the Miss Peregrine books. —*Julia Smith*

Murray the Viking.

By Adam Stower. Illus. by the author.

June 2025. 192p. Random, $16.99 (9798217030989); paper, $6.99 (9798217030996). Gr. 1–4.

Murray the cat just wants a quiet life full of naps, sunny spots, and the occasional sticky bun. But when his owner, the hapless wizard Fumblethumb, accidentally magics Murray's last sticky bun into an actual bunny, the cat's world gets a lot more interesting. The irrepressible Bun loves excitement most of all, a trait that comes in handy when Fumblethumb accidentally enchants the cat flap and sends the newly formed duo through a time portal that PA-POOFs them into a Viking hall. The worried Vikings have been waiting on the arrival of troll hunters to locate a missing community member, and the astonished animals find themselves on a quixotic quest that makes them fast friends and unlikely heroes. This bubbly British import is a charmer, and the lighthearted tone and shorter length make for a relaxed read. Playful illustrations are entertaining and energetic, with the spritely Bun pinging across pages and Viking longships stretching comically across multiple spreads. Tag along with this terrific time-traveling team for an adorable adventure with lots of laughs. —*Emily Graham*

Roll for Danger: The Cursed Catacombs.

By Nick Eliopolus. Illus. by Ethan M. Aldridge.

July 2025. 272p. Disney/Hyperion, $17.99 (9781368083898). Gr. 4–7.

In a "Pick Your Path"–style adventure that requires using a six-sided die to fill out a character sheet and make ongoing choices, wizard Bristleboor sends his untried apprentice, Seth, deep underground in search of a rare elixir ingredient. Though the ensuing tale's flowchart forks 233 times, Eliopulos keeps things simple, mostly by repeating passages virtually verbatim so that there isn't much flipping back and forth needed—and by reducing the number of endings to a bare minimum. In deference to more sensitive readers, he keeps the level of violence low in both events and language; only twice is blood actually shed, and though the evil wizard winds up dead in every plotline, Seth's inexplicitly described demises are neither frequent nor final. Also, the challenges he faces on his quest run as much to puzzles or logical posers as to giant spiders and like horrors. Aldridge's inky sketches supply atmospheric portraits and spot images to this projected series opener that younger gamers should navigate with ease. —*John Peters*

Sabrena Swept Away.

By Karuna Riazi.

July 2025. 224p. Greenwillow, $18.99 (9780063098718). Gr. 3–6.

According to family lore, Sabrena is descended from Sinbad the Sailor. It seems far-fetched, but it would certainly explain her affinity for water. Stories, particularly those from *One Thousand and One Nights,* have always been a huge part of her family life—and never more so than now, with her grandmother's dementia worsening; stories are the only thing that can bring her back to the present. Sabrena is unsure of her own storytelling skills, and starting at a new Islamic school does nothing to help her confidence. But when she suddenly produces puddles that act as a portal to her beloved book, Sabrena is faced with a whole new set of pressing problems: mythical monsters, a sunken kingdom, and a race to get back home to help her grandmother. The wondrous storybook surroundings and occasionally unsettling mythological figures are delightfully drawn, and the fast pace and shorter length will appeal to a wide range of ages. A beautiful, bite-sized fairy tale that reminds readers of the power in telling your own story. —*Emily Graham*

Stitch: Reimagining Frankenstein.

By Pádraig Kenny.

July 2025. 208p. Candlewick/Walker, $17.99 (9781536241983). Gr. 3–6.

Stitch leads a simple life in the castle at the edge of the forest. Every morning, he wakes up and makes a mark on the wall, one for every day since he first awoke: 585 days ago as of the story's start. He feeds his pet mouse. He visits his friend Henry, locked inside a cage, and they chat. He goes out to the garden and dreams of exploring the world. And he checks on the Professor to see if he's still asleep. This routine is interrupted by the arrival of the Professor's nephew, who is accompanied by an assistant, Alice, as well as a barrage of bad news—and life in the castle will never again be the same. Kenny (*The Monsters of Rookhaven*, 2021) takes apart the original *Frankenstein* tale and sews the pieces back into an uplifting fable that's bursting at the seams with heart and optimism. *Stitch* explores themes of friendship, prejudice, and morality through the eyes of a large-hearted protagonist who never fails to approach it all with empathy and kindness. —*Ricardo Reading*

The Weirdies.

By Michael Buckley. Illus. by Forrest Burdett.

Aug. 2025. 288p. Little, Brown, $14.99 (9780316572699). Gr. 5–7.

Spun off from the first two episodes of an audio original, this distinctly Lemony Snicket–style gothic features three 10-year-old siblings who would fit right into the Addams Family, a kindly social worker willing to overlook the kids' fondness for explosives and other peccadilloes in order to adopt them, and their thoroughly demonic parents, who are (incorrectly) thought to be dead. Barnacle Weirdie and his sisters, Melancholy and Garlic, exude roguish charm in the cover illustration but are more like destructive forces of nature in the story. Growing up in a huge mansion with servants to brush their teeth, dress them, and even chew their meat, the three are later plucked from the Our Lady of the Perpetual Side-Eye orphanage by the relentlessly loving Miss Emily. The children are swept up in a custody battle when their ruthless birth mom and dad unexpectedly reappear with a fiendish plan to exploit them to restore the family fortunes. Readers who delight in macabre details, savagely caricatured grown-ups, and plucky young folk coping with unfortunate events will be tickled. —*John Peters*

Witchycakes: Sweet Magic.

By Kara LaReau. Illus. by Ariane Moreira.

Aug. 2025. 80p. Random, $15.99 (9798217025855). Gr. 1–4.

This is an enchanting new chapter book series that will captivate young readers with its heartwarming story. A young witchling named Blue works in a bakery with Mama Moon in the cozy little seaside town of Shelville. Mama Moon bakes up the magical goodies, and Blue rides their bike around, making deliveries and trying to help others along the way. Blue, along with their trusty seagull, tries to find a lost guinea pig, relieve an exhausted neighbor, and cheer up a store owner in mourning. Blue's character is relatable and sweet as they try to make their neighbors' lives better but end up making a few mistakes along the way. The charming, full-color art on every page brings the story to life, making it perfect for early readers who are just starting to enjoy chapter books. The end of the book includes a fun recipe to pair with the book. With its themes of kindness, helping others, and community, *Witchycakes* is a perfect read for children who love magical stories with a sweet twist. —*Alana Jara*

Young

The Search for Our Cosmic Neighbors.

By Chloe Savage. Illus. by the author.

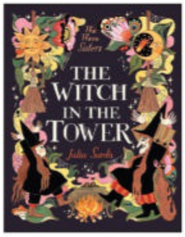
Sept. 2025. 32p. Candlewick, $18.99 (9781536247497). K–Gr. 3.

For 10 years, Commander Julia and the crew of Mission Star Drifter have been exploring the far reaches of the solar system, hoping to find signs of life; 10 years of being crammed in a spaceship with the same people (plus one dog) and all their annoying habits. Julia decides the next planet they explore will be their last. The grumpy crew piles onto the mountainous, salmon-colored terrain and begins collecting samples and recording data, while only the dog takes note of a little yellow fellow regarding the busy humans. The dreamy watercolor scenes, awash in whimsical details and confectionary colors, employ cutaways that reveal subterranean caverns filled with crystals and mushrooms and a whole colony of the plump yellow creatures, who invite the Star Drifter team below ground to explore. Curiosity and wonder quickly dispel the crew's prior despair, and Julia observes that the space creatures seem to do things "simply for the joy of it." A gentle adventure and sparkling reminder to appreciate life in each moment, wherever you happen to be. —*Julia Smith*

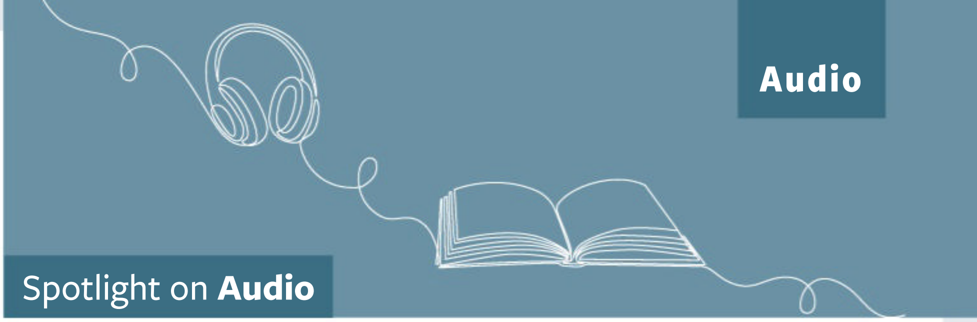
★ The Witch in the Tower.

By Júlia Sardà. Illus. by the author.

Sept. 2025. 64p. Candlewick, $19.99 (9781536243017). K–Gr. 3.



Sardà began The Three Sisters picture-book series with the stunning forest adventure *The Queen in the Cave* (2022), which starred the eldest girl, Franca. Here Carmela, the middle child, has a revelatory experience of her own. Feeling bored and annoyed with her sisters, Carmela decides to walk off her bad mood by playing Walk until You Can't Walk Anymore, and just as it seems that she can't take another step, Carmela finds herself at the foot of a tower. So, she knocks. A chipper witch opens the door ("Eye of toad and pupil of goat! . . . I'm so glad you came!") and whisks Carmela into her abode. Lushly cluttered illustrations reveal rooms packed with plants and gothic details (a gargoyle, crows, bubbling beakers), veritably demanding close inspection. The witch brews a special potion that allows Carmela to let go of her worries and to open her eyes to the wonders of the universe—and of herself. Sardà's intricate artwork reflects Carmela's inner journey as much as her outer one, truly letting loose as Carmela gleefully unlocks her own free-spirited magic. It's a wild rumpus of sorts and a love letter to the outcasts, "the lonely, the lost, and the different ones"—and that is a beautiful, empowering thing. —*Julia Smith*



Spotlight on Audio

Adult

The Ascent.
By Allison Buccola. Read by Carlotta Brentan.
2025. 12hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593950166).

In this tense psychological thriller, Lee Burton is desperate to outrun a past tied to a vanished cult known as the Fifteen. When a stranger shows up claiming to be her long-lost sister—and holding the answers Lee has spent years chasing—Lee is faced with a choice: take a leap of faith or risk unraveling her carefully constructed life. Established audiobook narrator Brentan brings her vocal talent and adds the atmospheric haze. Brentan delivers a gripping performance, expertly capturing Lee's mounting anxiety and fragile grip on reality. Her steady pacing and subtle tonal shifts heighten the suspense as Lee's secrets are revealed. Cults have long fascinated readers, and this twist-filled thriller is sure to captivate fans of dark domestic suspense. Recommended for listeners who enjoyed *The Push* (2020), by Ashley Audrain, and *The Good Sister* (2020), by Sally Hepworth. —*Shellie Zeigler*

Austen at Sea.
By Natalie Jenner. Read by Rupert Graves.
2025. 11hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250400468).

Jenner returns to the world of Jane Austen with the Stevenson family of Boston in 1865. The Stevensons are devoted Janeites; sisters Henrietta and Charlotte write to the author's surviving brother, who invites them to the Austen family home in England. The pair's pursuit of Jane's material legacy grows more complex as they encounter a widening cast of characters and make their first independent choices as adults. Meanwhile, Massachusetts Supreme Court justices, including their father, convene a Jane Austen book club, in which they explore themes in Austen's writings and the era's progress towards women's rights. Graves, who played Mr. Weston in *Emma* (2020), narrates in an upright, English fashion per the subject matter; his tone and pacing underscore the time period's focus on propriety. His voice suits the court's subplot well, but while his Americanized accent helps distinguish the young ladies' dialogue, it doesn't always match their feminine youth. In all, this is a workmanlike recording that will interest Graves' devotees and Austen's biggest fans. —*Jane Philbrick*

Great Big Beautiful Life.
By Emily Henry. Read by Julia Whelan.
2025. 12hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217063994).

When journalist Alice Scott gets an exclusive invite to interview reclusive heiress Margaret Ives for a proposed biography, she jumps at this career-making opportunity. The only problem? Margaret has also invited Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Hayden Anderson to hear her story. After spending a month with each applicant, the abrasive octogenarian will decide who will write her book. Unhappy, but willing to make the most of the arrangement, Alice and Hayden begin their respective interviews with Margaret, and despite their different approaches to the story, develop an unlikely friendship—and maybe something more. But when Margaret's reticence gets in the way of the truth, the two find themselves pooling their resources to figure out the *real* story. Award-winning narrator Whelan captures the grumpy/sunshine dynamic between

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Alice and Hayden, contrasting Alice's chipper, go-get-'em attitude with Hayden's weary standoffishness. Her Margaret is a brusque woman whose pointed barbs hide decades of pain, recounted by Whelan with journalistic authority in the book's numerous biographical asides. Reminiscent of *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* (2017), by Taylor Jenkins Reid, Henry's latest slow-burn romance balances humor and heart, expertly conveyed by Whelan's dynamic narration. —*Kaitlin Conner*

The Manor of Dreams.

By Christina Li. Read by Catherine Ho.

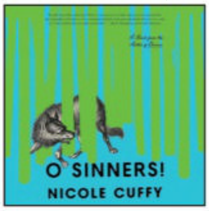
2025. 12hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797190167).

So many women—both living and dead—will inhabit Yin Manor, a California mansion that becomes the scene of a contentious standoff between two Chinese American families. Ho has the behemoth task of distinguishing them all, which she doesn't quite fully accomplish . . . but attentive listening certainly yields entertaining rewards. Oscar winner Vivian Yin is dead. Two weeks before, she changed her will, bequeathing the estate to Elaine Deng, the daughter of Vivian's former housekeeper and gardener. Vivian's daughters, Lucille and Rennie, won't relinquish their inheritance; to delay the transfer, they request one week in the house, with Lucille's daughter in tow, to sort Vivian's effects and take "time to process." Over those seven days, secrets will come out that span marital abuse, endless gaslighting, young love, and a hungry garden. Long before its latest incarnation, the house held death and destruction from a legacy dating back to nineteenth-century anti-Chinese railroad history. True happiness was never possible. Li packs in generations of racism, misogyny, classism, and elitism, fueled by supernatural forces, creating a narrative maelstrom that Ho somehow manages to patiently and empathically tame just enough. —*Terry Hong*

★ O Sinners!

By Nicole Cuffy. Read by J.D. Jackson and SEVAN.

2025. 13hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593950043).



Nicole Cuffy's sophomore novel is a profound exploration of faith, identity, and the human quest for belonging. The novel initially follows Faruq, a journalist grappling with his father's recent death. Faruq embeds himself within The Nameless, a secluded community in California's redwoods led by Odo, an enigmatic Vietnam War veteran. As Faruq delves deeper into the group's teachings, he confronts his own beliefs and past traumas. Cuffy masterfully intertwines three narratives: Faruq's present-day investigation, Odo's experiences during the Vietnam War, and a social media script detailing The Nameless' contentious history with a Texas fundamentalist church. SEVAN brings the present-day chapters to life with a smooth, thoughtful, and emotionally resonant performance. In contrast, JD Jackson powerfully delivers the Vietnam War flashbacks with a gravelly, commanding voice that gives Odo's backstory weight and urgency. Together, the narrators complement each other and create a clear and compelling distinction between the timelines. The transition between the narratives is smooth and enables a distinct transgression as the story moves forward. *O Sinners!* encompasses numerous genres—literary fiction, psychological drama, war narrative, cult exploration—and seamlessly blends them into a bold, thought-provoking story about belief, identity, and the human need for meaning. —*Shellie Zeigler*

The Usual Family Mayhem.

By HelenKay Dimon. Read by Mia Barron.

2025. 9.5hr. HarperAudio, DD (9780063240599).

Kasey's been at the DC business incubator for four months and three days: "I still had no idea what I did for a living other than sit at my desk and play games on my phone." Pressured to present a salable idea, she pitches a North Carolina pie business run by "two women of a certain age" as poised for high-growth investment, which gets her sent south to close the deal. She didn't mention that the creators are

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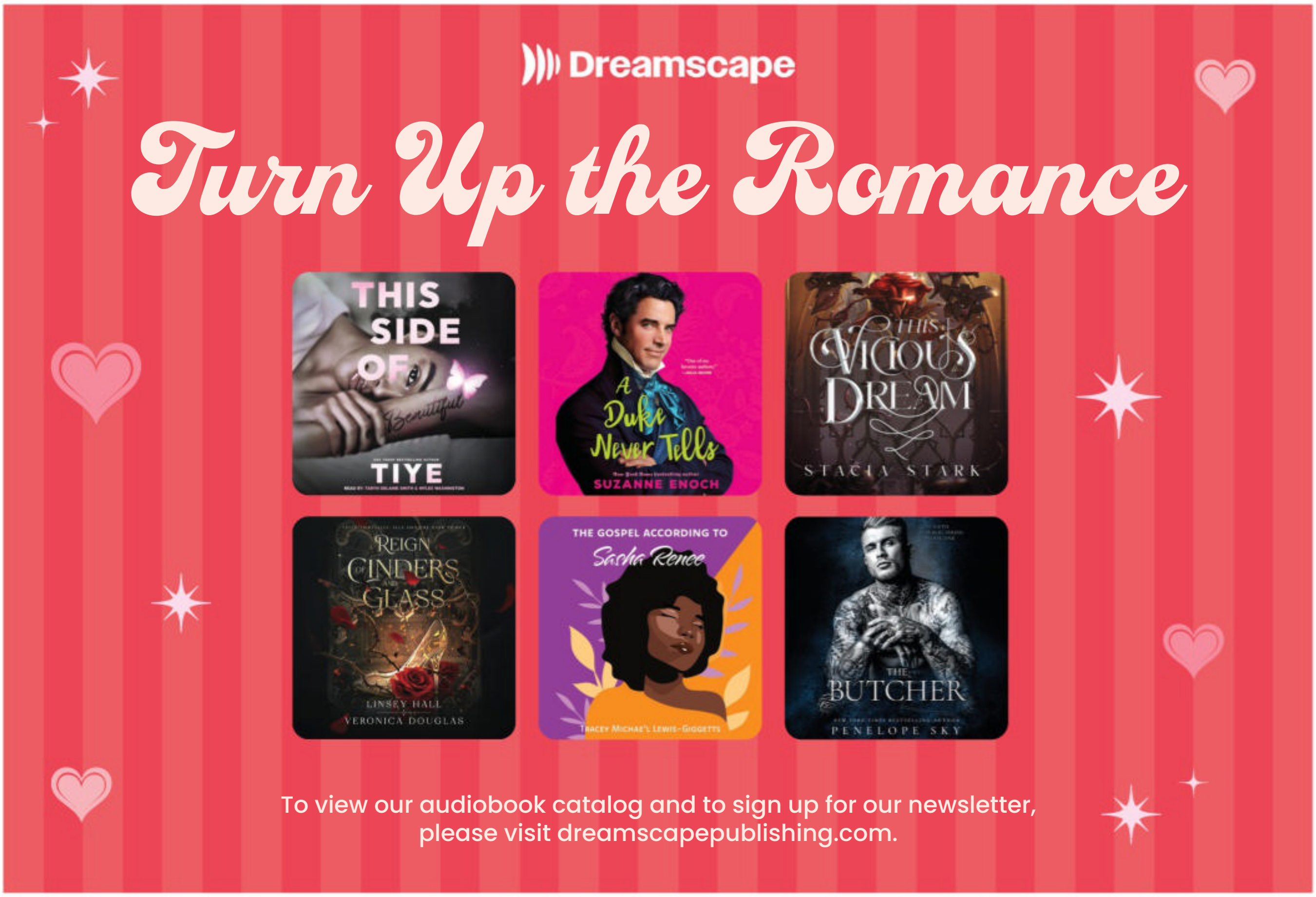
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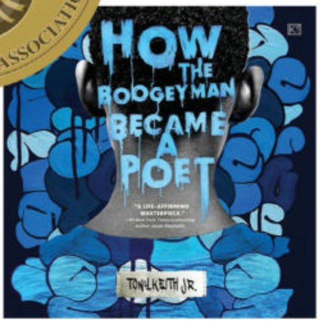

The *Booklist* Odyssey Interview, Young Adults

Abagail Marks for HarperAudio

By Heather Booth

HarperAudio's *How the Boogeyman Became a Poet,* produced by Abigail Marks, is the first memoir-in-verse to win the Odyssey Award. It is the story of the poet Tony Keith Jr., the book's author and narrator, as he comes of age and discovers himself as a young gay Black man and as a poet. Throughout the audiobook, listeners are continually presented with new experiences through the judicious and inventive use of sound and music, all while hearing the relatable, rhythmic story directly from the poet himself. *Booklist* asked Marks about these creative production choices.

Heather Booth: *How the* Boogeyman Became a Poet *is written in verse, which gives it a rhythm and movement before any sound is applied. Can you talk about the process of incorporating music and sound effects into the audiobook?*
Abigail Marks: The narration is always the centerpiece, and Tony's performance is immediate, intimate, and poetic. My main goal is to give each book what it needs and I felt like we could enhance the storytelling if we focused on creating "locations" throughout. Using a light touch, we used filters to mimic phone calls. We used the sound of writing to highlight journal entries. And we used scoring to give the listener the sense of being in a huge, empty room or in a crowded theatre. We also used cues to make it feel like the weather was hot, or that it was the dead of night.

Booth: *What was the collaboration like between the audiobook production team and the author/narrator?*
Marks: The collaboration was great. Tony and I talked about his inspiration for the book. Then I dug into the text and created a vision for the production. I shared my goals with our amazing team: director, January LaVoy; in-house production manager, Nate Hunter; and Tim Bader, our head of post-production. The vision developed and, as is typical, we used the annotated text to inform that performance, editing, and post-production.

Booth: *Are there any moments in the audio that stand out to you as being especially memorable, either because of their resonance or because of the way you crafted the audio?*
Marks: One thing I loved was creating locations. We used a lot of cosmic sounds in a subtle way to evoke feelings of floating in space, feeling small and insignificant, and moving through a path that's unknown. The payoff was that the last poem in the book was a huge counterpoint. The story delves into the trials of coming-of-age, but the last poem is the "arrival." Tony steps into the light, he gets to fully enjoy being himself. The majority of the book is intimate, so it was a lot of fun to create a "live performance" using musical instruments, foley, reactions from an audience, etc. It ends the book on a joyful and hopeful note.

Booth: *Can you share a little about your background as an audiobook producer?*
Marks: I became a producer by accident. Until the pandemic, I made my living as an actor, director, and coach. I'd been narrating books for a while, but when the pandemic hit, audiobooks became my main focus. I started directing more and more, which lead to producing many of those programs. Shortly thereafter, I began consulting with production studios to find and nurture new talent from marginalized and underrepresented communities, so that there is a pool of authentic talent for the *many* new voices being published. Fostering inclusivity and accessibility gave me a reason to commit to producing.

Booth: *What changes have you seen in audiobook production for youth over the years, and what changes do you anticipate on the horizon?*
Marks: The audiobook landscape has changed dramatically over the last 15 years. The audiobook sector of publishing is growing at an incredible rate and there's increasing demand for content. We're seeing more creative and multi-cast productions. Many authors write with audiobooks in mind, and audio-only and audio-first publishing are becoming more prevalent. My hope is that audiobooks will continue to become more accessible and more accepted as a form of reading. It can be a thrilling experience to listen to a talented actor read the story to you, but if you're a person who struggles with reading text, audiobooks can be invaluable. I hope that one day the stigma of listening to a book will go away: audiobooks are not cheating.

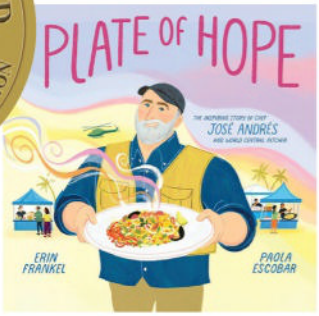
PLATE OF HOPE
The inspiring story of chef JOSÉ ANDRÉS and World Central Kitchen
ERIN FRANKEL
PAOLA ESCOBAR

The *Booklist* Odyssey Interview, Youth

Andy Jones for Dreamscape

By Heather Booth

From its first moments, *A Plate of Hope*, this year's Odyssey Winner for youth, transports listeners into the cultural and culinary life of the great philanthropist José Andrés of World Central Kitchen. Through the judicious and heartfelt efforts of producer Andy Jones for Dreamscape, we hear music, sound effects, and voices that convert this picture-book biography into a sensory feast.

Heather Booth: ***Can you talk about the process of incorporating music and sound effects into the audiobook?***
Andy Jones: For me, the creative process always begins with the heart of the picture book—the characters, the setting, and the tone. It's essential to establish a vivid sense of place and remain as authentic as possible, especially with biographical stories. Children are incredibly perceptive, so I approach each project with a deep sense of responsibility and do deep research to find audio that feels true to the book's essence. Once the right elements are in place, the real fun begins. As a producer and editor, there's something deeply satisfying about adjusting pacing and timing to let a piece of music or a subtle sound cue elevate the emotional impact of a scene. When everything clicks and the story resonates just a little more deeply because of those choices . . . that's the magic of what we do.

Booth: ***Your narrator, Luis Carlos de la Lombana, brings such a lovely timbre to the book and echoes Andrés' Spanish origins.***
Jones: Finding the right narrator was incredibly important to me. I wanted a voice that carried the cultural authenticity and lived experience of someone from Spain to truly honor Andrés' heritage. Luis Carlos de la Lombana was an exceptional fit for this project, and I believe this was his first full audiobook performed entirely in English. He approached the narration with such care, nuance, and sensitivity. Luis brought not only a beautiful vocal quality but also his personal insights and cultural perspective, which added a depth that elevated the production. Our recording sessions were filled with thoughtful conversations about tone, emotion, and context, and his contributions were invaluable. I'm truly grateful for his work and look forward to the possibility of collaborating again in the future.

Booth: ***Can you share a little about your background as an audiobook producer?***
Jones: I began my journey in audiobook production at Dreamscape in 2013 and found my passion in adapting children's picture books into audiobooks or lightly animated videos. The stories I've worked on (over 400 of them) range from playful and whimsical to historically significant and socially resonant—each one offering a unique chance to connect with young audiences in meaningful ways. Over the years, this work has been recognized with more than a dozen AudioFile Earphones Awards, five Audie Award nominations—including one win—and now two Odyssey Award recognitions. It's been an incredibly rewarding path, and I'm proud to have helped share so many meaningful stories with young audiences.

Booth: ***What changes have you seen in audiobook production for youth over the years, and what changes do you anticipate on the horizon?***
Jones: The growth has been remarkable. More narrators than ever before are eager to lend their voices to children's literature and the quality has skyrocketed. We're seeing stories that are not only beautifully written but brought to life with a level of care and sophistication that truly honors young listeners. And audiobooks are being used in innovative ways, like in interactive toys, allowing children to engage with stories on their own terms. There's also been a very encouraging movement toward inclusivity, as with descriptive audio tracks, which provide greater accessibility for visually impaired children. I'm hopeful we'll continue to see more thoughtful efforts like this. Looking ahead, I anticipate even greater integration of read-along features, whether through on-screen captions or pairing audiobooks with physical books. These components enhance comprehension and also support early literacy in a fun and effective way. The more avenues we create for children to experience stories, the more empowered and imaginative our young listeners will become.

Booth: ***Any general thoughts on your Odyssey win?***
Jones: I'm incredibly honored by the Odyssey win, and deeply grateful to everyone who helped bring *A Plate of Hope* to life. Erin Frankel and Paola Escobar crafted such a powerful and inspiring story, and Luis Carlos de la Lombana delivered a beautifully heartfelt performance that truly captured its spirit. I'm thankful to Deyan Audio for connecting me with Luis and providing the recording facilities, and to our talented freelance partners at SLTM Studio for their support throughout the process. And, of course, a heartfelt thank you to the entire team at Dreamscape. As it happens, my time with Dreamscape concluded on May 1, so receiving this award as I close that chapter has been especially meaningful. It's a wonderful note to end on, and I'm filled with gratitude for the journey.

Audiobooks for kids!

UNICORNS HAVE BAD MANNERS

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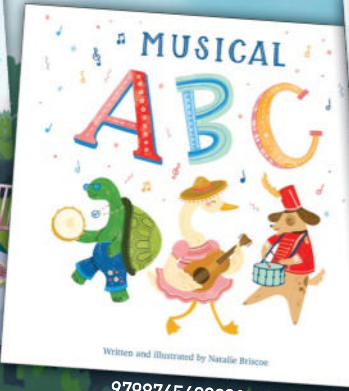
MUSICAL ABC
Written and illustrated by Natalie Briscoe

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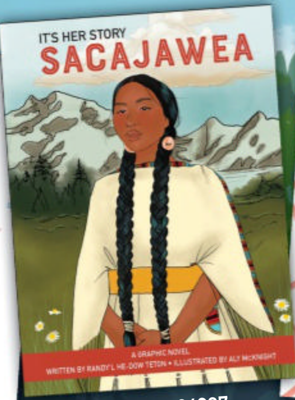
IT'S HER STORY
SACAJAWEA
A GRAPHIC NOVEL

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LITTLE DUMPLINGS

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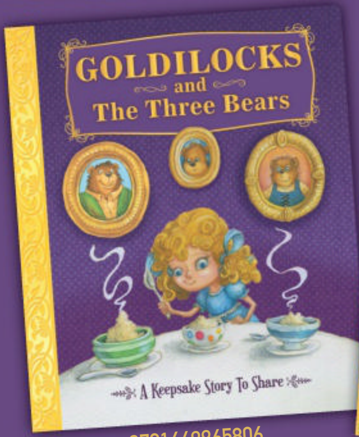
GOLDILOCKS and The Three Bears
A Keepsake Story To Share

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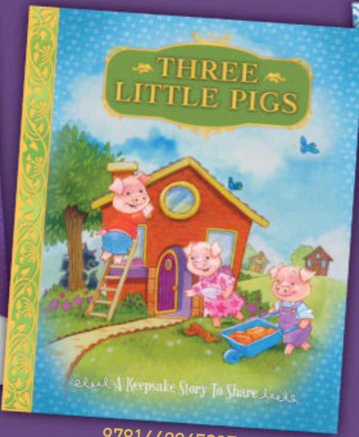
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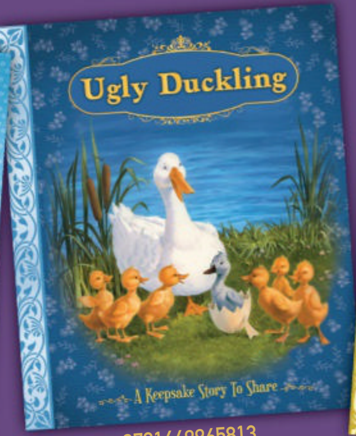
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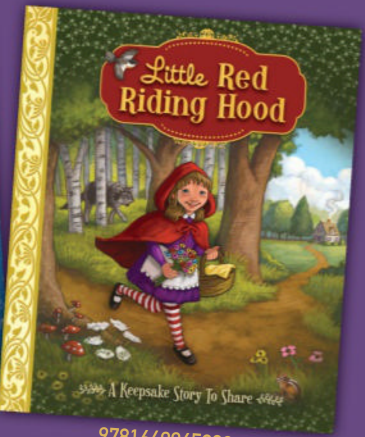
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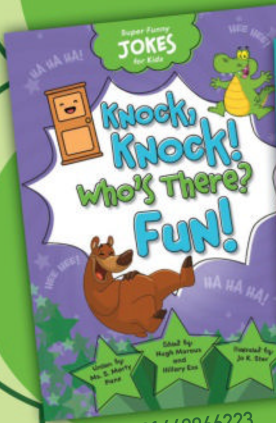
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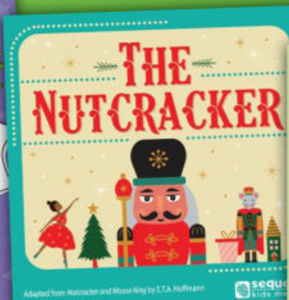
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Narrated by Marty Peterson
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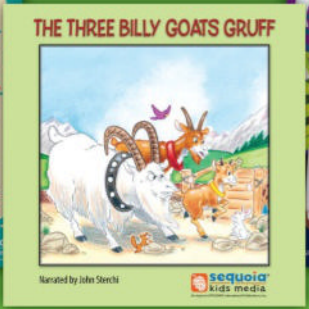
THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF
Narrated by John Sterchi
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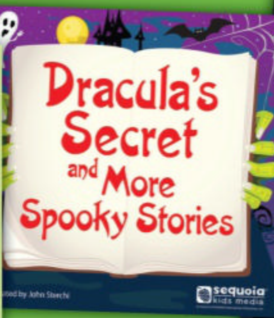
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Classics Corner

Classics Corner highlights new recordings of classic titles.

The Glass Menagerie.

By Tennessee Williams. Performed by a full cast.

2024. 2hr. L.A. Theatre Works, DD (9781682661949).

★ The Rose Tattoo.

By Tennessee Williams. Performed by a full cast.

2025. 2hr. L.A. Theatre Works, DD (9781682661956).

★ A Streetcar Named Desire.

By Tennessee Williams. Performed by a full cast.

2025. 2hr. L.A. Theatre Works, DD (9781682661963).

Summer and Smoke.

By Tennessee Williams. Performed by a full cast.

May 2025. 2hr. L.A. Theatre Works, DD (9781682661970).

LATW
VINCENT D'ONOFRIO
GLENNE HEADLY
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

L.A. Theatre Works has released, for the first time, four previously recorded plays by Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*, written in 1944 and recorded in 1996, features Calista Flockhart as Rose in a performance that achingly displays the character's bashful yearning. One of Williams' most famous, widely produced, and Pulitzer-Awarded plays, 1948's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, stars Amy Brenneman as Stella, Glenne Headly as Blanche, and an electrifying Vincent D'Onofrio as Stanley. The production, recorded in 1998, simmers with the tension and heat the play is known for, and Headly and Brenneman are particularly skilled at drawing out their characters' underlying strengths, motivations, and tender spots. In Headly's interpretation of Blanche, her high, airy voice creates a beguiling contrast to the character's clear intelligence, while Brenneman's deeper, earthy tones paint a character consumed by her passion for Stanley. The 1948 play *Summer and Smoke* was recorded in 2008 and follows pious, buttoned-up Alma, played by Sarah Zimmerman, who yearns for neighborhood rake John, played by Mark Kudisch, after he returns home and tensions smolder in the summer heat. *The Rose Tattoo*, written in 1951, was recorded in 1999 with Anthony LaPaglia and Mercedes Ruehl, stars of the 1995 Tony-awarded cast. LaPaglia and Ruehl play off each other dynamically as a delivery driver and widowed seamstress in a Sicilian neighborhood of New Orleans who find a spark of love. The duo brings forth a necessary humor to the workaday characters as they explore new passions. Together, this quartet of plays illuminates major themes in Williams' works, including propriety and passion, expectations, regret, and family roles. While the actors featured may not have the same contemporary prominence as they did when the plays were recorded, their performances are universally strong and connected to their characters. Though the recordings are decades old, the sound quality is nonetheless stellar. Sound effects, stage noise, and audience reactions add to the immersive feeling of the plays. Like all L.A. Theatre Works classics, these plays are solid and useful purchases for classroom use, listeners who enjoy *Stories on Stage*, and those revisiting the classics for personal enrichment. —*Heather Booth*

YA/C: *Plays are written to be heard; this collection makes an ideal companion to high school study of Williams' work. HB.*

Continued from p.112

her Gram and partner Celia. Arriving home, Kasey can't tell her beloved elders that she's supposed to sell their company. Keeping secrets rarely ends well, especially when Kasey discovers that certain pies might *actually* be to die for. Celia's nephew, hot-shot lawyer Jackson, is the logical person to provide counsel—never mind that he's Kasey's forever crush. Can they figure out what's really going on? Versatile Barron effortlessly assumes cozy Southern charm, enlivening the young and old through delicious and distasteful shenanigans. Barron ensures that questioning Kasey, patiently logical Jackson, manners-demanding Gram, gentle Celia, brutish Harlan, and bully Brock are all imbued with convincing performances. —*Terry Hong*

Youth

★ Bad Badger.

By Maryrose Wood. Read by Chris Devon.

2025. 2.5hr. Dreamscape, DD (9781666688344). Gr. 1–4.

What does it mean to be a badger? This question eats at the very heart of Septimus, himself a badger (isn't he?) who eschews the forest for a seaside cottage, who knows the value of a tasty panino, and revels in the whispers of the wind and the drama of an aria in equal measure. Indeed, he doesn't even look very badger-ish, for where many badgers have stripes, Septimus has spots. An "odd duck" indeed. Septimus lives a peaceful, if lonely, life until he finds Gully, a laconic seagull (also a bit of an odd duck), and the two quickly form a deep, true friendship. When Gully disappears, it's up to Septimus to push outside his (literal) comfort zone and find his treasured friend, even when the going is hot and sandy (horrible). Devon's narration is delightfully quirky. Septimus feels kindly eccentric, at times curious, nervous, and reverent. Each of Gully's "caws" is imbued with meaning and emotion. Additional characters are fully formed and uniquely voiced, bringing the story to life and inviting the listeners inside. As cozy as a cup of warm tea shared with a good friend. —*Caitlin Savage*

El Niño.

By Pam Muñoz Ryan. Read by Tim Pabon and E.J. Lavery.

2025. 4hr. Scholastic, DD, $74.99 (9781546151326). Gr. 4–6.

Kai and water are one. The middle schooler is the pride of his swim team. Recently, however, his race times have been so poor that Kai fears losing his spot on the team. He has been grieving: two years ago, his sister Cali disappeared at sea and Kai refuses to let go. Where *is* Cali? Pabon understands his role as the guardian of a mystery. At the point of the story where fantasy usurps reality, he is ready to stick to Kai's version, patiently navigating through the stormy seas of overwhelming discoveries. With affection and passion, Lavery weaves mermaid magic into Kai's story, presenting the listener with a Greek myth of an underwater guardian queen, which fascinates both Cali and Kai. Is Kai riding the right wave toward finding the truth? Is there a connection between the sunken island and what happened to Cali? A beautiful reading of a story about sibling loyalty. —*Milena Durek*

The Family I'm In.

By Sharon G. Flake. Read by Zeno Robinson.

2025. 7hr. Scholastic, DD, $74.99 (9781546151661). Gr. 7–10.

Robinson's youthful voice perfectly embodies John-John, who is nearing the end of his junior year of high school and trying to figure out who he's taking to prom. (Constant pressure from his dad to have relationships only makes him feel more inadequate.) His best friend Caleb is struggling to make money to support his family after his father suffers an aneurysm and can no longer work. Robinson depicts John-John's confusing inner emotions gently and authentically, even as he outwardly works to embody the kind of masculinity his dad expects of him. His depiction of Caleb's father's stilted speech and deeper voice ground listeners in his experience of losing his ability to provide as well as his need for constant care. Robinson uses a deeper baritone and confident pace for John-John's dad, a well-respected member of his community who thrives in his perceived authority. This is a companion audiobook to the author's other two novels in the series, featuring familiar characters but focusing this time on the relationships between Black sons and their fathers. —*Alex Richey*

Spotlight on **SF/Fantasy & Horror**

Art from *Where the Axe is Buried.*

Adult

Bat Eater and Other Names for Cora Zeng.

By Kylie Lee Baker. Read by Natalie Naudus.

2025. 9hr. Harlequin, DD (9781488233456).

In the four months that 24-year-old Cora Zeng has been a crime scene cleaner, she's witnessed plenty of horror. The only corpse she's ever seen, though, was before she started this job—when a stranger pushed her sister Delilah off the subway platform after uttering "bat eater." As the world shut down, enough people believed that "Chinese people eat bats just to start plagues" to engender the widespread murder of Asian women throughout NYC. Repeatedly finding bats at the gruesome scenes suggests connections, although the police don't care. Since Cora disregarded all the afterlife duties on which Auntie Zeng insisted, Delilah won't go peacefully. But maybe Cora can use that supernatural energy to find Delilah's—and 374 others'—killer(s). Naudus infuses her narration with palpable unease, underscoring the apprehension as threats relentlessly loom. Notable among her characterizations are Delilah's co-workers—amicable Harvey with his (baaaad) jokes and edgy Yifei with a past as scary as her present. Baker's ending author's note soberly highlights how "we as a county still haven't learned not to scapegoat an entire race of people in times of fear." —*Terry Hong*

Broken Souls and Bones.

By LJ Andrews. Read by Lindsey Dorcus and Will Thorne.

2025. 13.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217015818).

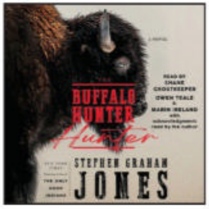
Hidden away in a quiet village as a child, and serving in the lord's household, Lyra Bien has never used her rare melding magic, a type of magic kings will kill to control. When the King's melder dies, he sends the prince's private guard, Roark Ashwood, to find the hidden melder. To save her friends from the King's wrath, Lyra must become the King's new melder. This novel, filled with stunning world-building and a unique type of magic, will appeal to readers who enjoy detailed fantasy romance. Dorcus and Thorne take turns narrating the roles of Lyra and Roark. Like Andrews' previous novels, this newest romantasy has a Norse influence, and both narrators read the dialogue with appropriate accents. The pacing, voice acting, and engaging performances engross the listener in the unfolding story of Lyra, her forbidden magic, and the equally forbidden romance. Give this to readers who enjoy elaborate world-building romantasy and enemies-to-lovers romance like Yarros' *Fourth Wing* (2023). —*Melissa Wheelock*

The Buffalo Hunter Hunter.

By Steven Graham Jones. Read by a full cast.

2025. 15.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668117323).

It's 2012, and Etsy Beaucarne's great-great-great-grandfather's journal has been recovered from a parsonage wall during a construction project. Readers are transported to the first entry in her tresayle Arthur Beaucarne's 1912 journal, when he is an old Lutheran pastor serving in Montana who meets an "Indian gentleman" who comes to Sunday services. However, Good Stab isn't a gentleman (not any more, at least), and has his own story to tell, one in which hundreds of Blackfeet are slaughtered and he has become an avenging monster. Not only is the writing remarkable and distinct for each character's first-person accounts, but the full cast working to personify them creates an immersive experience for listeners. Indigenous narrator Shane Ghostkeeper delivers Good Stab's tale with understated and detached calm, while Owen Teale's resonant voice, with its air of authority, is fitting for an aged early twentieth-century clergyman. Alternatively, Marin Ireland presents Etsy with a conversational ease amid clearly exhibited emotions. All three narrators' performances intensify as more horror is revealed and realized. As a special treat, sound effects enliven the ending as Etsy faces the actual outcomes of both Good Stab and her tresayle. Unless the reader is sensitive to descriptive gruesome content, this book will appeal to fans of Westerns and historical fiction as well as horror. SGJ fans will devour this, while those new to his work will want another title immediately. —*Suzanne Temple*



The Devils.

By Joe Abercrombie. Read by Steven Pacey.

2025. 25hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250391131).

Abercrombie returns with a new series not connected to his previous grimdark fantasy works. While it is perhaps slightly *less* grim than his previous books, *The Devils* is still rife with violence, dark humor, excellent prose, and memorable characters evoked vividly by Pacey. A group of church-sanctioned "devils" escort a newly found princess, formerly a street urchin, across Europe to claim her throne. Along the way they are menaced by relatives of the princess and their monstrous minions, who would rather she not do so. The band of devils includes an immortal knight, a cunning rogue, a charming vampire, an outcast werewolf, a disappearing elf, and a recently appointed "leader," a monk who is in over his head. In trademark Abercrombie fashion, these characters soon become familiar enough that listeners feel that they've known them for years. Longtime Abercrombie reader Pacey returns with an impeccable variety of European accents, easily differentiating each character and bringing dramatic flair to the story. Pacey's performance brings the story to life. Listeners will be on the edge of their seats, waiting to discover whether Princess Alexia survives twists, turns, and betrayals to claim her throne. —*Matt Matkowski*

the DEVILS
JOE ABERCROMBIE

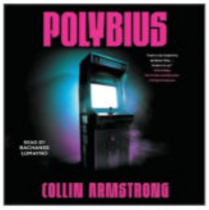
Polybius.

By Collin Armstrong. Read by Rachanee Lumayno.

2025. 10hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797189956).

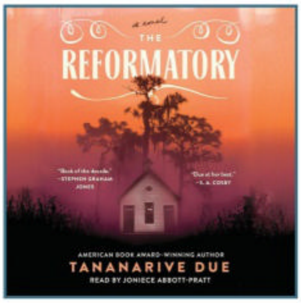
Just like the urban legend-inspired arcade game it's titled after, *Polybius* is instantly engrossing and begs you to answer its mysteries. It's 1982, and high schooler Andi Winston begrudgingly moves to the small town of Tasker Bay with her mother. Though she despises video games, tech-savvy Andi takes a job at Home Video World to save up for a move back home. Andi's classmate Ro crushes on her from afar and slowly attempts to breach her icy, reserved composure. When Andi's shady boss, Mal, buys *Polybius*, a used and discounted arcade game, Tasker Bay quickly devolves into homicidal chaos. The stakes are high as Andi and Ro must work together to discover whether *Polybius* is connected to the anarchy outside the arcade's walls—and, more importantly, how to save Tasker Bay and everyone in it from extinction. Lumayno shines as the foreboding, omniscient narrator, and her striking portrayals of each character make this story even more bingeable. Armstrong's characters are vivid, the prose is sharp, and Home Video World is practically tactical. This debut will satisfy horror listeners while also blending conspiracy-thriller elements and an endearing dash of romance. Lumayno's theatrical inflection and intonation make *Polybius* a perfectly chilling summer listen. —*Abby McCabe*

YA: *You can't deny the welcome* Stranger Things *parallels—all fans of the Netflix series will enjoy the 1980s arcade setting, high school main characters, conspiracies, and budding romances. AM.*



Top 10 SF/Fantasy & Horror Novels on Audio

High fantasy through an Indigenous lens, a revisit of Black American history as horror, a multicultural haunted house, time travel, and an orc-led cozy are among the subjects explored in the best and most-wanted sf/fantasy and horror on audio from the last two years. —*Heather Booth*



The Book That Wouldn't Burn. By Mark Lawrence. Read by Jessica Whittaker. 2023. 23hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593675717).

The first installment of The Library Trilogy introduces, through Whittaker's careful rendering, a vast array of characters sure to charm and captivate.

Bookshops & Bonedust. By Travis Baldree. Read by the author. 2023. 8hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250910776).

Baldree shares how everyone's favorite coffee-loving orc learned to appreciate books. The author is a talented and animated fantasy narrator sure to ensorcell and delight.

The Buffalo Hunter Hunter. By Steven Graham Jones. Read by a full cast. 2025. 15.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781668117323).

Jones' horror novels are always stellar on audio. The narrators who personify his most recent tale, a story of vampiric vengeance as told in a diary from 1912, create an immersive experience for listeners.

The Djinn Waits a Hundred Years. By Shubnum Khan. Read by Soneela Nankani. 2024. 10hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593789711).

A lavish South African home becomes, over the years, a haunted and ramshackle shell of its former glory, but Nankani's narration keeps the inhabitants—past and present, living and lurking—all vividly colorful.

Fractal Noise. By Christopher Paolini. Read by Jennifer Hale. 2023. 10hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250870995).

Narrator Hale's performance, backed by sound effects and her dedication to the characters—she even sings one character's song—elevate this sf tale of scientists on the precipice of a major discovery.

The Haunting of Room 904. By Erika T. Wurth. Read by Ina Barrón. 2025. 10hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250381460).

Classically trained Barrón makes her audiobook debut voicing fellow Indigenous author Wurth's protagonist Olivia, a clairvoyant paranormal investigator with a psychology doctorate.

The Ministry of Time. By Kaliane Bradley. Read by George Weightman and Katie Leung. 2024. 10.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797176888).

Leung's range reaches gleefully across centuries in this debut that travels through time as it mashes up genres in a thrilling, heart-pounding sf adventure.

The Reformatory. By Tananarive Due. Read by Joniece Abbott-Pratt. 2023. 21hr. Simon & Schuster Audio, DD (9781797160139).

Listeners will be amazed at Abbott-Pratt's brilliance as she distinctly channels multiple complex personalities, whether they be living or dead, and crafts a number of memorable supernatural character portrayals.

Somewhere beyond the Sea. By TJ Klune. Read by Daniel Henning. 2024. 16hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250331601).

Henning returns to voice the sequel to *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. His narration is filled with theatrical flair, musical intonations, growls, snorts, and impeccable comedic timing.

To Shape a Dragon's Breath. By Moniquill Blackgoose. Read by Charley Flyte. 2023. 17hr. Books on Tape, DD (9780593677254).

Blackgoose turns an Indigenous lens on a steampunk world governed by Nordic legends and Victorian manors. Flyte begins with a soft and gentle voice that builds in intensity throughout this high-fantasy adventure.

The Staircase in the Woods.

By Chuck Wendig. Read by a full cast.

2025. 13.5hr. Books on Tape, DD (9798217065967).

Building off a very real phenomenon and its accompanying conspiracy theory, Wendig crafts a gothic tale that asks a foreboding question: If all of your friends climbed a staircase, would you climb too? Following a literary structure reminiscent of *It*, Wendig writes of four high school friends who reunite twenty years after their friend, Matty, climbed a staircase in the woods and vanished. When terminally ill Nick calls to see his old friend group before his untimely death, they never thought they were agreeing to face *another* uncanny staircase, and their survivor's guilt along with it. Once Nick gains the reluctant help of the others, their quest to find Matty quickly devolves into a repugnant psychological torture game. Short chapters and multiple central characters allow this novel to shine in audio format. The trio of readers have gripping, distinct voices and are associated with specific characters (notably, Benson as Lor), which makes this audio both immersive and convenient, balancing the narrative's length and intense subject matter. Macabre and gruesome, Wendig elicits fear and disgust with a blend of real and unreal, normal and paranormal horrors. —*Abby McCabe*

The Sundowner's Dance.

By Todd Keisling. Read by Malcolm Hillgartner.

2025. 10hr. Shortwave, DD (9781696617680).

A tense, disturbing, funny, touching horror story about aging, grief, and . . . space worms. Jerry moves to Fairview Acres retirement community after the death of his wife, hoping to be left alone in his grief. What he finds are odd neighbors who spend all night partying, eerie noises on his roof at night, and an overly charming leader of the community with a special interest in Jerry. Hillgartner masterfully handles the increasingly unnerving atmosphere of the neighborhood and neighbors, who are all subtly just a little too friendly, too eager, and too peppy. He presents a heartfelt picture of Jerry's grief, crankiness, and kindness. As the weirdness increases and the truth of Fairview is revealed, Hillgartner and Keisling ground the horrors with the fully realized characters (and the all too human fears) that are at the heart of this tale. —*Lizzie Matkowski*

Where the Axe Is Buried.

By Ray Nayler. Read by Eunice Wong.

2025. 9hr. Macmillan Audio, DD (9781250385994).

Audie Award-winner Wong is back with another compelling Nayler narration (after *The Mountain in the Sea*, 2022), an impressive feat with seven different character POVs oscillating throughout this concise sf listen. Uncanny and at times quite bleak, Wong brings an empathetic element to a future where all societies have failed, and the world is ruled by totalitarian governments—or rather, ruled by totalitarian AI leaders with software updates and algorithmic solutions that incite anarchy. This slow-burn political thriller peers into the lives of a revolutionary celebrity, evil AI, a war-hero prisoner, and more, all while commenting on authoritarianism with clear references to Putin's Russia (the Federation) and the European Union (the Union). However, hope is carried throughout the novel by the revolutionaries who refuse to bury the hatchet: "No one forgets where the axe is buried. It will always be there to dig up again." Nayler's afterword is an essential inclusion and the staggering number of parallels to the present day make this listen completely absorbing. Recommend to fans of Edward Ashton and *When the Sparrow Falls* (2022), by Neil Sharpson. —*Abby McCabe*

Youth

The Dragon's Apprentice.

By James Riley. Read by Alana Kerr Collins.

2025. 6hr. Listening Library, DD (9798217015528). Gr. 3–6.

James Riley brings it in this series starter. A magical journal connects past and present fantasy worlds through a girl named Ciara, who awakens Scorch, a dragon. Scorch would be willing to take on her magical training if only Ciara would slow down long enough to listen to him! A tale of self-discovery and adventure mixed with equal parts determination and love, this title is lyrically voiced by Belfast-born audio narrator and actress Collins (*The Bone Season,* 2013). She brings a lilting Celtic cadence to the production, taking the listener to the village of Skael and sharing their inhabitants and enemies with equal effectiveness. Collins is able to pivot between all these characters, bringing life to their interactions. She creates authentic tension between Ciara and Scorch and infuses their quest with urgency. Middle-grade listeners will appreciate the spunky heroine, cranky old dragon, and secondary characters. This purchase will find a wide audience of listeners ready for book two. A great listen-alike for those who enjoyed Alexandra Ott's *Seekers of the Wild Realm* (2020) and Katherine Rundell's *Impossible Creatures* (2024) as well as for graduates of Quinn's *Dragon Kingdom of Wrenly* series. —*Beth Rosania*

Fairy Door Diaries: Eliza and the Flower Fairies.

By Megan McDonald. Read by Stephanie Willing.

2025. 40min. Dreamscape, DD (9781666688337). Gr. 1–4.

In a tale rich with magic and color, Eliza is a regular girl with an annoying little sister until she retreats into a personal fairy world—the Land of UnderStair—through a door in the crawlspace. Spritely fairies crossed with beautiful flowers provide the cast for an enchanted adventure. After discovering that a bracelet created by a new friend, Poppy, is what allowed her into the special world, Eliza finds herself in peril when she picks an unusual flower. Wilting and discoloration begin to affect her flower fairy friends as a result, and Eliza must act bravely to save the Land of the Flower Fairies, facing witches with names like Belladonna and Wolfsbane. *Judy Moody* series author McDonald presents a new tale for the early chapter book-reading audience, shifting from realism to fanciful storytelling. The audio adaptation superbly complements this charming, shimmering story. Reader Willing narrates at a spirited yet measured pace: a marvelous combination for anyone reading along. A perfect recording for family listening and for readers just beginning to tackle chapters. —*Deidre Winterhalter*

Ghost Scout's Honor.

By Carey Blankenship-Kramer. Read by Cassandra Morris.

2025. 7hr. Scholastic, DD, $20.99 (9781546151388). Gr. 3–6.

GHOST SCOUT'S HONOR
Carey Blankenship-Kramer
Read by Cassandra Morris

Set in an alternate Savannah where kids under 16 can see ghosts, this is an action-packed ghost story with a captivating mystery at its core. Seventh-grader Evey is forced to join the Ghost Scouts in order to qualify for the student of the year award, Evey's sole focus since being dumped by her best friend. After receiving training in the art of ghost maintenance, her squad is tasked with ghost sitting, or staying at homes to ensure their residents are safe. As the ghosts become more aggressive, Evey uncovers the mystery of Ghost X and must learn to trust her squadmates in order to solve the puzzle. Morris expertly handles the narration in this production. Her talents are displayed as she skillfully manages the pacing of this mystery, speeding up her narration in the action scenes and slowing to a crawl in the more scary and tense moments. Her character voicing is also on point, and getting to know all the characters via Morris' slight variations in tone and accents is a delight for listeners' ears. Finally, Morris has fun with this production, taking full advantage of the descriptive text and jump scares lurking around every corner. Hand this audiobook off to tween readers who enjoy a good ghost story as well as a strong tale of friendship developed through teamwork. —*Colleen Seisser*

Sunrise on the Reaping.

By Suzanne Collins. Read by Jefferson White.

2025. 13hr. Scholastic, DD, $89.99 (9781546171508). Gr. 9–12.

Haymitch Abernathy is best known as protagonist Katniss and Peeta's wretched yet committed mentor in the original *Hunger Games* story. Readers will now find answers to the many questions Haymitch provoked in this heartbreaking history. In a Quarter Quell year, where double the number of tributes are selected, Haymitch's trip to the Games seems inevitable. He must leave his job as a teetotalling moonshine runner, say goodbye to his beloved mother and brother, and most painfully, separate from his love, Lenore Dove, as he is sent to the Arena. Inspired by Lenore Dove's quiet rebellion, from the initial Reaping to his grueling victory, Haymitch commits small and large acts of sabotage in opposition to the Capitol, making infinitely harsher an already impossible undertaking. White is a seasoned actor who voices Haymitch with tenderness, outrage, and determination. Lenore Dove is the source of much of the song in the recording, with her words always on Haymitch's mind. White alternately solemnly recites and melodiously sings some of Lenore Dove's stealthy protest songs. Threaded also throughout the gripping story is Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," which references "Lenore" repeatedly. White's interpretation of the well-worn poem is both solemn and immediate. The story is captivating, the audio rendition equally so. —*Deidre Winterhalter*

SUNRISE ON THE REAPING
READ BY JEFFERSON WHITE
SUZANNE COLLINS

What Fell from the Sky.

By Adrianna Cuevas. Read by a full cast.

2025. 5.5hr. Dreamscape, DD (9781666679236). Gr. 3–6.

ADRIANNA CUEVAS
WHAT FELL FROM THE SKY

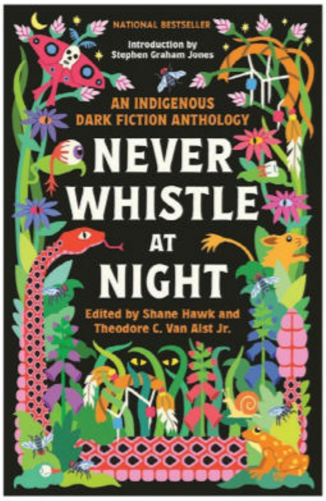
Welcome to 1950s Soledad, Texas, a place where not much happens and everyone knows their place. Until soldiers start parachuting out of the sky and the sleepy little town becomes a practice site for an enemy takeover. To add to the complications, middle schooler Pineda "Pete" Matlege discovers an alien in the family barn. While Pineda and friends take on the challenge of reuniting their otherworldly visitor with her parents, they must navigate a currently asinine military situation. The story explores questions regarding the Cold War and racial inequities, with its heart centering around community, family, and trust. Author Cuevas (*The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez*, 2020) infuses quirky humor alongside the anxieties and social realities of the time period to serve up a thought-provoking and enlightening mishmash of historical *and* science fiction. The audio production enhances the tale, giving added dimension to an awesome story. It is well produced and delivered believably by a full cast of narrators that infuses wonder and dawning maturity into the characters while vocally driving the wacky wild ride that is this weirdly endearing story. Perfectly paced, it will appeal to those in the 10 to 14-year-old target audience, keeping them listening until the satisfying end. —*Beth Rosania*

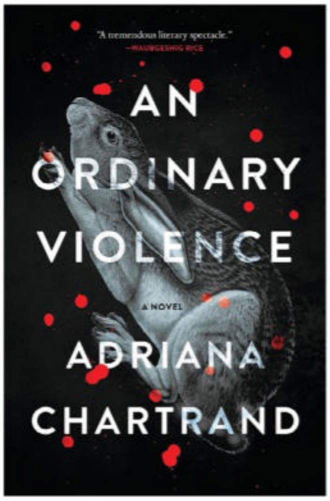
Booklist Backlist

Indigenous Horror

By Leah von Essen

In a genre often driven by real-life histories of violence, Indigenous horror comes with a deep well of intergenerational trauma and atrocity, as well as thousands of years of tradition, legend, and beliefs to draw from. Readers are compelled by the rich, haunting work of Indigenous authors, and these volumes are a testament to a growing, exciting set of voices.


NATIONAL BESTSELLER
Introduction by Stephen Graham Jones
AN INDIGENOUS DARK FICTION ANTHOLOGY
NEVER WHISTLE AT NIGHT
Edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr.

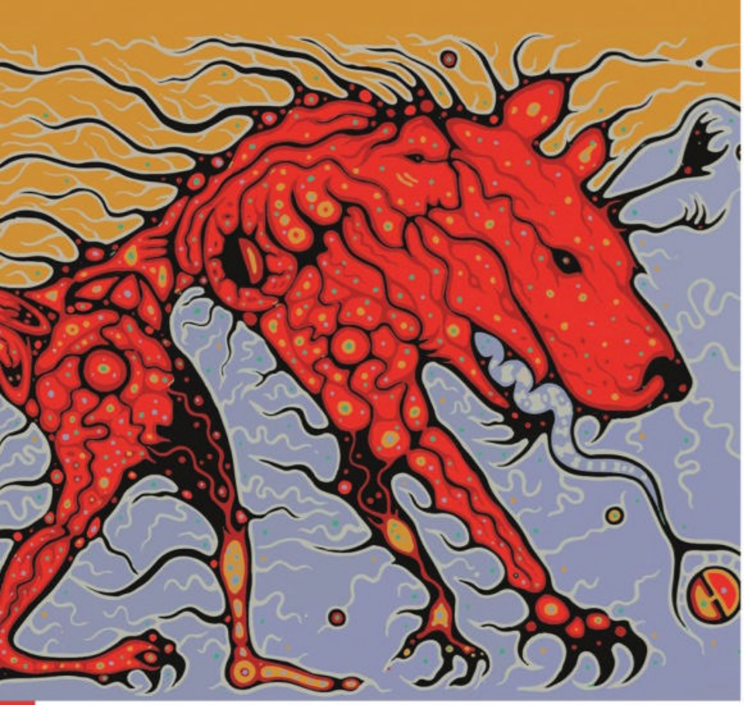


Bad Cree. By Jessica Johns. 2023. Doubleday.

Mackenzie wakes up from a dream with a crow's head in her hand and knows she's in trouble. She heads home for the first time in years to confront her feelings over her sister's sudden death in this supernatural thriller that is both eerie and a powerful novel about family and dealing with grief.

Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology. Edited by Shane Hawk and Theodore C. Van Alst Jr. 2023. Vintage.

A woman is haunted by a violent double. A tick grows on someone's body, swollen and parasitic. Villains collect Indigenous bodies like trophies. Many of these stories use horror to explore the real-life monsters and traumatic histories of Indigenous life; and many bring in Indigenous stories, traditions, and folklore. The collection features both well-known and new authors.



Art from *Zegaajimo*.

The Only Good Indians. By Stephen Graham Jones. 2020. Saga.

A decade ago, Lewis and his friends killed an elk they shouldn't have, going against the unspoken rules of the Blackfeet community they've grown up in. And now, ten years later, the ghosts of what they did are rising to take their revenge. This genuinely scary rush of a novel features elk hooves, eyes glowing in the darkness, and things seen just out of the corner of your eye, all pooling until the dam breaks and violence surges in.

An Ordinary Violence. By Adriana Chartrand. 2023. Anansi/Spiderline.

A young Indigenous woman flees Toronto for her childhood home, a place of grief and bad memories. Dawn is glad to hear her brother will be released from prison early, but then she begins to see signs that Cody and his new friend are pursuing something sinister. This suspenseful tale builds slowly and effectively into eldritch horror.

Taaqtumi: An Anthology of Arctic Horror Stories. 2019. Inhabit.

This collection of stories by authors who live in or come from places that hug the Arctic is published by an Inuit-owned independent publishing company. The unique perspective roots this collection full of grim reminders of real Indigenous history alongside haunted snowstorms, zombies, and cannibals.

The Things She's Seen. By Ambelin Kwaymullina and Ezekiel Kwaymullina. 2019. Knopf.

This rich, short book written for teens but with adult crossover appeal tells the story of Beth Teller, an Australian girl who died young and is watching her detective father, who can see and hear her, grieve. Everything changes when she encounters a girl at the center of a recent crime, telling Beth a story that she needs to pass on to her father. A strong tale about real-life horrors faced by aboriginal people in Australia.

Zegaajimo: Indigenous Horror Fiction. Edited by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm and Nathan Niigan Noodin Adler. 2024. Kegedonce.

Zegaajimo: "to tell a scary story." Eleven writers come together in this collection to tell stories that haunt, provoke, and make you shiver. Accompanied by eerie, crawling illustrations, these stories leverage Indigenous life and folklore across North America to evoke strange and supernatural worlds.

From the creator of the hit series *Tokyo Revengers*

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Astro Royale, Vol. 1
Story and Art by Ken Wakui

Price: $11.99 US / $15.99 CAN
ISBN: 9781974753031

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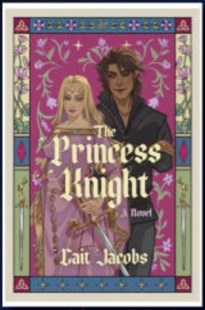
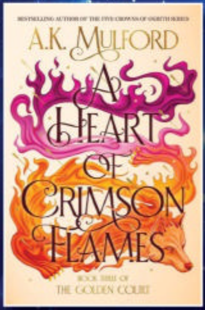
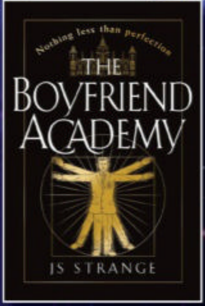
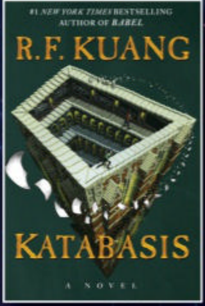

The Princess Knight
A Novel
Cait Jacobs

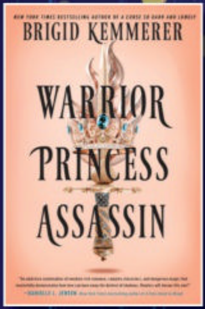

A.K. MULFORD
A HEART OF CRIMSON FLAMES
BOOK THREE OF THE GOLDEN COURT

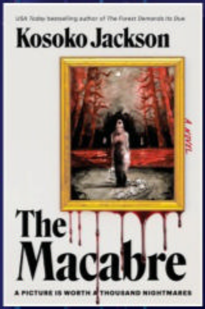
VESSELLESS
TO SAVE HIS SOUL, HE MUST STEAL HERS
CORTNEY L. WINN

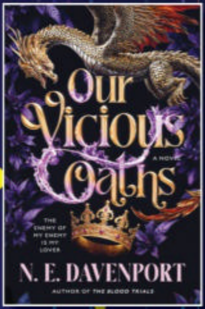

Nothing less than perfection
THE BOYFRIEND ACADEMY
JS STRANGE

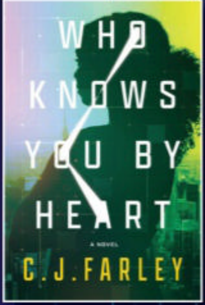

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BABEL
R.F. KUANG
KATABASIS
A NOVEL

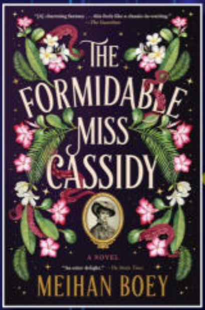
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
AKWAEKE EMEZI
SON OF THE MORNING
A NOVEL

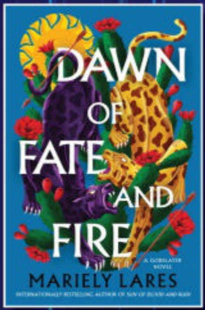

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF A CURSE SO DARK AND LONELY
BRIGID KEMMERER
WARRIOR PRINCESS ASSASSIN

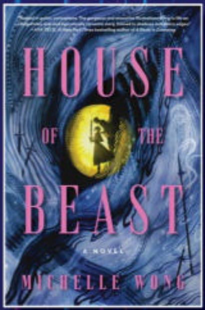

USA Today bestselling author of The Forest Demands Its Due
Kosoko Jackson
A NOVEL
The Macabre
A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND NIGHTMARES

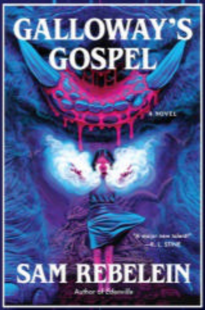

Our Vicious Oaths
A NOVEL
THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY LOVER
N. E. DAVENPORT
AUTHOR OF THE BLOOD TRIALS


WHO KNOWS YOU BY HEART
A NOVEL
C.J.FARLEY


THE FORMIDABLE MISS CASSIDY
A NOVEL
MEIHAN BOEY


DAWN OF FATE AND FIRE
A GODSLAYER NOVEL
MARIELY LARES
INTERNATIONALLY BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF SUN OF BLOOD AND RUIN


HOUSE OF THE BEAST
A NOVEL
MICHELLE WONG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A NOVEL
"A major new talent!" —R. L. STINE
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A NOVEL
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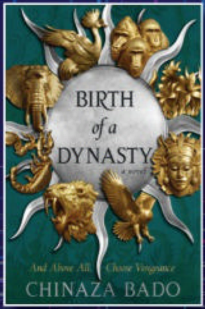
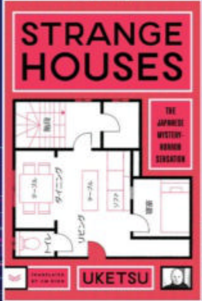
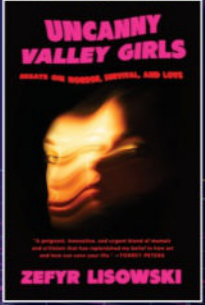
SOPHIE JORDAN
A SCAR IN THE BONE
A NOVEL
Dragons live...


BIRTH of a DYNASTY
a novel
And Above All, Choose Vengeance
CHINAZA BADO


STRANGE HOUSES
THE JAPANESE MYSTERY-HORROR SENSATION
UKETSU


UNCANNY VALLEY GIRLS
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